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Old Mr. Tredgold.¹

A STORY OF TWO SISTERS.

BY MRS. OLIPHANT.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE next morning the new world began frankly, as if it was nothing out of the usual, as if it had already been for years. When Katherine, a little late after her somewhat melancholy vigils, awoke, she heard already the bustle of the houseful of people, so different from the stillness which had been the rule for years. She heard doors opening and shutting, steps moving everywhere, Sir Charles's voice calling loudly from below, the loud tinkling of Stella's bell, which rang upstairs near her maid's room. Katherine's first instinctive thought was a question whether that maid would look less worried—whether, poor thing, she had dreamt of bags and handboxes all night. And then there came the little quaver, thrilling the air, of a child's cry; poor little dissipated Job, after his vigil with his father, crying to be awake so early—the poor little boy who had tried to kick at her with his little naked feet, so white in the dimness of the corridor, on the night before. It was with the strangest sensation that Katherine got hurriedly out of bed, with a startled idea that perhaps her room might be wanted, in which there was no reason.

¹ Copyright, 1895, by M. O. W. Oliphant.

At all events, the house had passed into new hands, and was hers no more.

Hannah came to her presently, pale and holding her breath. She had seen Job fly at the ayah, kicking her with the little feet on which she had just succeeded in forcing a pair of boots. 'He said as now he could hurt her, as well as I could understand his talk. Oh! Miss Katherine, and such a little teeny boy, and to do that! But I said as I knew you would never let a servant be kicked in your house.'

'Neither will my sister, Hannah—but they are all tired and strange, and perhaps a little cross,' said Katherine, apologetically. She went downstairs to find the breakfast-table in all the disorder that arises after a large meal—the place at which little Job had been seated next to his father littered by crumbs and other marks of his presence, and the butler hastily bringing in a little tea-pot to a corner for her use.

'Sir Charles, Miss Katherine, he's gone out; he's inspecting of the horses in the stables; and my lady has had her breakfast in her room, and it's little master as has made such a mess of the table.'

'Never mind, Harrison,' said Katherine.

'I should like to say, Miss Katherine,' said Harrison, 'as I'll go, if you please, this day month.'

'Oh, don't be in a hurry!' she cried. 'I have been speaking to Mrs. Simmons. Don't desert the house in such haste. Wait till you see how things go on.'

'I'd stay with you, Miss Katherine, to the last hour of my life; and I don't know as I couldn't make up my mind to a medical gentleman's establishment, though it's different to what I've been used to—but I couldn't never stop in a place like this.'

'You don't know in the least what is going to happen here. Please go now, and leave me to my breakfast. I will speak to you later on.'

A woman who is the mistress of her own house is compelled to endure these attacks, but a woman suddenly freed from all the responsibilities of ownership need not, at least, be subject to its drawbacks. Katherine took her small meal with the sensation that it was already the bread of others she was eating, which is always bitter. There had been no account made of her usual place, of any of her habits. Harrison had hastily arranged for her that corner at the lower end of the table, because of the disarray at the other, the napkins flung about, the cloth dabbled and

stained. It was her own table no longer. Any philosophic mind will think of this as a very trifling thing, but it was not trifling to Katherine. The sensation of entire disregard, indifference to her comfort, and to everything that was seemly, at once chilled and irritated her; and then she stopped herself in her uncomfortable thoughts with a troubled laugh and the question, was she, indeed, with her strong objection to all this disorder, fitting herself, as Stella said, for the position of maiden aunt? One thing was certain at least, that for the position of dependent she never would be qualified.

It was a mild and bright October day: the greyiness of the afternoon had not as yet closed in, the air was full of mid-day sunshine and life. Sir Charles had come in from his inspection of 'the offices' and all that was outside. He had come up, with his large step and presence, to the dressing-room in which Stella, wrapped in a quilted dressing-gown and exclaiming at the cold, lay on a sofa beside the fire. She had emerged from her bath and all those cares of the person which precede dressing for the day, and was resting before the final fatigue of putting on her gown. Katherine had been admitted only a few minutes before Sir Charles appeared, and she had made up her mind that at last her communication must be fully made now; though it did not seem very necessary, for they had established themselves with such perfect ease in the house believing it to be hers, that it would scarcely make any difference when they were made aware that it was their own. Katherine's mind, with a very natural digression, went off into an unconsciously humorous question—what difference, after all, it would have made if the house and the fortune had been hers? They would have taken possession just the same, it was evident, in any case—and she, could she ever have suggested to them to go away? She decided no, with a rueful amusement. She should not have liked Sir Charles as the master of her house, but she would have given in to it. How much better that it should be as it was, and no question on the subject at all!

'I want you to let me tell you now about papa's will.'

'Poor papa!' said Stella. 'I hope he was not very bad. At that age they get blunted, and don't feel. Oh, spare me as many of the details as you can, please! It makes me wretched to hear of people being ill.'

'I said papa's will, Stella.'

'Ah!' she cried, 'that's different. Charlie will like to know.'

He thinks you've done nicely for us, Katherine. Of course many things would have to be re-modelled if we stopped here; but in the meantime, while we don't quite know what we are going to do——'

'I'd sell those old screws,' said Sir Charles, 'they're not fit for a lady to drive. I shouldn't like to see my wife behind such brutes. If you like to give me *carte blanche* I'll see to it—get you something you could take out Stella with, don't you know!'

'I wish,' said Katherine, with a little impatience, 'that you would allow me to speak, if it were only for ten minutes! Stella, do pray give me a little attention; this is not my house, it is yours—everything is yours. Do you hear? When papa died nothing was to be found but the will of 'seventy-one, which was made before you went away. Everybody thought he had changed it, but he had not changed it. You have got everything, Stella, everything! Do you hear? Papa did not leave even a legacy to a servant, he left nothing to me, nothing to his poor brother—everything is yours.'

Sir Charles stood leaning on the mantelpiece, with his back to the fire; a dull red came over his face. 'Oh, by Jove!' he said in his moustache. Stella raised herself on her pillows. She folded her quilted dressing-gown, which was Chinese and covered with wavy lines of dragons, over her chest.

'What do you mean by everything?' she said. 'You mean a good bit of money, I suppose; you told me so yesterday. As for the house, I don't much care for the house, Kate. It is *rococo*, you know; it is in dreadful taste. You can keep it if you like. It never could be of any use to us.'

'It isn't a bad house,' said Sir Charles. He had begun to walk up and down the room. 'By Jove,' he said, 'Stella is a cool one, but I'm not so cool. Everything left to her? Do you mean all the money, all old Tredgold's fortune—all! I say, by Jove, don't you know. That isn't fair!'

'I don't see why it isn't fair,' said Stella; 'I always knew that was what papa meant. He was very fond of me, poor old papa! Wasn't he, Kate? He used to like me to have everything I wanted: there wasn't one thing, as fantastic as you please, but he would have let me have it—very different from now. Don't you remember that yacht—that we made no use of but to run away from here? Poor old man!' Here Stella laughed, which Katherine took for a sign of grace, believing and hoping that it meant the

coming of tears. But no tears came. 'He must have been dreadfully sorry at the end for standing out as he did, and keeping me out of it,' she said with indignation, 'all these years.'

Sir Charles kept walking up and down the room, swearing softly into his moustache. He retained some respect for ladies in this respect, it appeared, for the only imprecation which was audible was a frequent appeal to the father of the Olympian gods. 'By Jove!' sometimes 'By Jupiter!' he said, and tugged at his moustache as if he would have pulled it out. This was the house in which, bewildered, he had taken all the shillings from his pocket and put them down on the table by way of balancing Mr. Tredgold's money. And now all Mr. Tredgold's money was his. He was not cool like Stella; a confused vision of all the glories of this world—horses, race-meetings, cellars of wine, entertainments of all kinds, men circling about him, not looking down upon him as a poor beggar but up at him as no end of a swell, servants to surround him all at once like a new atmosphere. He had expected something of the kind at the time of his marriage, but those dreams had long abandoned him; now they came back with a rush, not dreams any longer. Jove, Jupiter, George (whoever that deity may be) he invoked in turns; his blood took to coursing in his veins, it felt like quicksilver, raising him up, as if he might have floated, spurning with every step the floor on which he trod.

'I who had always been brought up so different!' cried Stella, with a faint whimper in her voice. 'That never had been used to it! Oh, what a time I have had, Kate, having to give up things—almost everything I ever wanted—and to do without things, and to be continually thinking could I afford it. Oh, I wonder how papa had the heart! You think I should be grateful, don't you? But I can't help remembering that I've been kept out of it, just when I wanted it most, all these years——'

She made a pause, but nobody either contradicted or agreed with her. Stella expected either the one or the other. Sir Charles went up and down swearing by Jupiter and thinking in a whirl of all the fine things before him, and Katherine sat at the end of the sofa saying nothing. In sheer self-defence Stella had to begin again.

'And nobody knows what it is beginning a house and all that without any money. I had to part with my diamonds—those last ones, don't you remember, Kate? which he gave me to make me forget Charlie. Oh, how silly girls are! I shouldn't be

so ready, I can tell you, to run away another time. I should keep my diamonds. And I have not had a decent dress since I went to India—not one. The other ladies got boxes from home, but I never sent to Louise except once, and then she did so bother me about a bill to be paid, as if it were likely I could pay bills when we had no money for ourselves! Tradespeople are so unreasonable about their bills, and so are servants, for that matter, going on about wages. Why, there is Pearson—she waits upon me with a face like a mute at a funeral all because she has not got her last half year's wages! By the way, I suppose she can have them now? They have got such a pull over us, don't you know, for they can go away, and when a maid suits you it is such a bore when she wants to go away. I have had such experiences, all through the want of money. And I can't help feeling, oh how hard of him, when he hadn't really changed his mind at all, to keep me out of it for those seven years! Seven years is a dreadful piece out of one's life,' cried Stella, 'and to have it made miserable and so different to what one had a right to expect, all for the caprice of an old man! Why did he keep me out of it all these years?' And Stella, now thoroughly excited, sobbed to herself over the privations that were past, from which her father could have saved her at any moment had he pleased.

'You ought to be pleased now at least,' said her husband. 'Come, Stella, my little girl, let's shake hands upon it. We're awfully lucky, and you shall have a good time now.'

'I think I ought to have a good time, indeed!' cried Stella. 'Why, it's all mine! You never would have had a penny but for me. Who should have the good of it, if not I? And I am sure I deserve it, after all I have had to go through. Pearson, is that you?' she cried. 'Bring me my jewel-box. Look here,' she said, taking out a case and disclosing what seemed to Katherine a splendid necklace of diamonds, 'that's what I've been driven to wear!' She seized the necklace out of the case and flung it to the other end of the room. The stones swung from her hand, flashing through the air, and fell in a shimmer and sparkle of light upon the carpet. 'The odious, false things!' cried Stella. 'Paris—out of one of those shops, don't you know? where everything is marked "Imitation." Charlie got them for me for about ten pounds. And that is what I had to go to Government House in, and all the balls, and have compliments paid me on my diamonds. "Yes, they are supposed to be of very fine water," I used to say. I used to laugh at first—it seemed a capital joke; but when you

go on wearing odious glass things and have to show them off as diamonds—for seven years!’

Sir Charles paused in his walk, and stooped and picked them up. ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I gave ten pounds for them, and we had a lot of fun out of them, and you looked as handsome in them, Stella, as if they had been the best. By Jove! to be imitation, they are deuced good imitation. I don’t think I know the difference, do you?’ He placed the glittering thing on Katherine’s knee. He wanted to bring her into the conversation with a clumsy impulse of kindness, but he did not know how to manage it. Then, leaving them there, he continued his walk. He could not keep still in his excitement, and Stella could not keep silence. The mock diamonds made a great show upon Katherine’s black gown.

‘Oh, I wish you’d take them away! Give them to somebody—give them to the children to play with. I’d give them to Pearson, but how could she wear a *rivière*? Fancy my wearing those things and having nothing better! You have no feeling, Kate; you don’t sympathise a bit. And to think that everything might have been quite different, and life been quite happy instead of the nightmare it was! Papa has a great, great deal to answer for,’ Stella said.

‘If that is all you think about it, I may go away,’ said Katherine, ‘for we shall not agree. You ought to speak very differently of your father, who always was so fond of you, and now he’s given you everything. Poor papa! I am glad he does not know.’

‘But he must have known very well,’ cried Stella, ‘how he left me after pretending to be so fond of me. Do you think either Charlie or I would have done such a thing if we had not been deceived? And so was Lady Jane—and everybody. There was not one who did not say he was sure to send for us home, and see what has happened instead. Oh, he may have made up for it now. But do you think that was being really fond of me, Kate, to leave me out in India without a penny for seven years?’

Katherine rose, and the glittering stones, which had only yesterday been Lady Somers’ diamonds, and as such guarded with all the care imaginable—poor Pearson having acquired her perennial look of worry as much from that as anything, having had the charge of them—rattled with a sound like glass, and fell on the floor, where they lay disgraced as Katherine went hurriedly away. And there they were found by Pearson after

Lady Somers had finished her toilet and gone downstairs to lunch. Pearson gave a kick at them where they lay—the nasty imitation things that had cost her so many a thought—but then picked them up, with a certain pity, yet awe, as if they might change again into something dangerous in her very hands.

CHAPTER XLII.

KATHERINE had put herself unconsciously in her usual place at the head of the luncheon table before Stella came downstairs. At the other end was Sir Charles with little Job, set up on a pile of cushions beside him.

‘Don’t wait for Stella, she’s always late,’ said Somers, helping his son from the dish before him; but at this moment Stella, rustling in a coloured dress, came briskly in.

‘Oh, I say, Kate, let me have my proper place,’ she said; ‘you can’t sit down with Charlie opposite, it’s not decent. And oh the funny old room! Did you ever see such a *rococo* house, Charlie, all gilding and ornament? Poor papa could never have anything grand enough according to his views. We must have it all pulled to pieces, I couldn’t live in such a place. Eh? why, Kate, you don’t pretend you like it, you who always made a fuss.’

Katherine had transferred herself to a seat at the side of the table, not without a quick sensation of self-reproach and that inevitable shame upon being thus compelled to take a lower place which no philosophy can get rid of. ‘I did not think where I was sitting,’ she cried, in instinctive apology; and then, ‘Let the poor house be, at least for the first week, Stella,’ she said.

‘Oh, that’s all sentiment and nonsense,’ cried Lady Somers. ‘My experience is when you’re going to change a thing, do it directly; or else you just settle down and grow accustomed and think no more of it. For goodness’ sake, Charlie, don’t stuff that child with all the most improper things! He ought to have roast mutton and rice pudding, all the doctors say; and you are ruining his constitution, you know you are. Why isn’t there some roast mutton, William? Oh, Harrison! why can’t you see that there’s some roast mutton or that sort of thing, when you’ve got to feed a little boy.’

'Me don't like roast mutton,' cried Job, with a whine. 'Me dine wid fader; fader give Job nice tings.'

'I'll look after you, my boy,' said Sir Charles, at one end of the table, while Harrison at the other, with a very solemn bow, discussed his position.

'It is not my place to horder the dinner, my lady; if your ladyship will say what you requires, I will mention it to Mrs. Simmons.'

'It is I who am in fault, I suppose, Stella,' cried Katherine, more angry than she could have imagined possible. 'Perhaps you will see Simmons yourself to-morrow.'

'Oh, not I!' cried Stella. 'Fancy the bore of ordering dinner with an old-fashioned English cook that would not understand a word one says. You can do it, Charlie. Don't give the child that *pâté de foie gras*,' she added, with a scream. 'Who's the doctor on the strength of the establishment now, Kate? He'll have to be called in very soon, I can see, and the sooner Job has a bad liver attack the better, for then it may be possible to get him properly looked after. And I must have an English nurse that understands children, instead of that stupid ayah who gives them whatever they cry for. Don't you think it's dreadful training to give them whatever they cry for, Kate? You ought to know about children, living all this while at home and never marrying or anything. You must have gone in for charity or nursing, or Churchy things, having nothing to do. Oh, I wish you would take Job in hand! He minds nobody but his father, and his father stuffs him with everything he oughtn't to have, and keeps him up half the night. One of these days he'll have such a liver attack that it will cut him off, Charlie; and then you will have the satisfaction of feeling that it's you that have killed him, and you will not be able to say I haven't warned you hundreds of times.'

'We've not come to any harm as yet, have we, Job?' said the father, placing clandestinely another objectionable morsel on the child's plate.

'No, fader. Job not dut off yet,' cried, in his little shrill voice, the unfortunate small boy.

In this babble the rest of the mid-day meal was carried on, Stella's voice flowing like the principal part of the entertainment, interrupted now and then by a bass note from her husband or a little cry from her child, with a question to a servant and the respectful answer in an aside now and then. Katherine sat quite silent listening, not so much from intention as that there was no

room for her to put in a word, and no apparent need for any explanation or intervention. The Somers took calm possession, unsurprised, undisturbed by any question of right or wrong, of kindness or unkindness. Nor did Katherine blame them; she felt that they would have done exactly the same had the house and all that was in it been hers, and the real circumstances of the case made it more bearable and took away many embarrassments. She went out to drive with Stella in the afternoon, Sir Charles accompanying them that he might see whether the carriage horses were fit for his wife's use. Stella had been partly covered with Katherine's garments to make her presentable, and the little crape bonnet perched upon her fuzzy fair hair was happily very becoming, and satisfied her as to her own appearance. 'Mourning's not so very bad, after all,' she said, 'especially when you are very fair. You are a little too dark to look nice in it, Kate. I shouldn't advise you to wear crape long. It isn't at all necessary; the rule now is crape three months, black six, and then you can go into greys and mauves. Mauve's a lovely colour. It is just as bright as pink, though it's mourning; and it suits me down to the ground—I am so fair, don't you know.'

'These brutes will never do,' said Sir Charles. 'Is this the pace you have been going, Miss Kate? Stella will not stand it, that's clear. Not a likely person to nod along like a hearse or an old dowager, is she?—and cost just as much, the old fat brutes, as a proper turn-out.'

'It's the same old landau, I declare,' cried Stella, 'that we used to cram with people for picnics and dances and things. Mine was the victoria. Have you kept the victoria all the time, Kate? Jervis made it spin along I can tell you. And the little brougham I used to run about in, that took us down to the yacht, don't you remember, Charlie, that last night? me in my wedding dress, though nobody suspected it—that is, nobody but those that knew. What a lot there were, though,' cried Stella, with a laugh, 'that knew!—and what a dreadful bore, Kate, when you would insist upon coming with me, and everybody guessing and wondering how we'd get out of it. We did get out of it capitally, didn't we? all owing to my presence of mind.'

'All's well that ends well,' said Sir Charles. 'We've both had a deuced lot of doubts on that question—between times. Miss Kate, would you mind telling me what kind of a figure it is this fortune that Stella is supposed to have come into? Hang me if I know; it might be hundreds or it might be thousands. You

see I'm a disinterested sort of fellow,' he said, with an uneasy laugh.

'The lawyer said,' Katherine explained, 'that it could not be under, but might be considerably over, fifty thousand a year.'

Sir Charles was silent for a moment and grew very red, which showed upon his sunburnt brick-red complexion like a sudden dye of crimson. He caught his breath a little, but with an effort at an indifferent tone repeated, 'Fifty thousand pounds!'

'A year,' Katherine said.

'Well!' cried Stella, 'what are you sitting there for, like a stuck pig, staring at me? Need there have been so much fuss about it if it had been less than that? Papa wasn't a man to leave a few hundreds, was he? I wonder it's so little, for my part. By the time you've got that old barrack of yours done up, and a tidy little house in town, and all our bills paid, good gracious, it's nothing at all, fifty thousand a year! I hope it will turn out a great deal more, Kate. I dare say your lawyer is the sort of person to muddle half of it away in expenses and so forth. Who is he? Oh, old Sturgeon that used to come down sometimes. Well, he is not up to date, I am sure. He'll be keeping the money in dreadful consols or something, instead of making the best of it. You can tell him that I shan't stand that sort of thing. It shall be made the best of if it is going to belong to me.'

'And what have you, Miss Kate?' said her brother-in-law, 'to balance this fine fortune of Stella's—for it is a fine fortune, and she knows nothing about it, with her chatter.'

'Oh, I know nothing about it; don't I?' said Stella. 'Papa didn't think so. He said I had a capital head for money, and that I was a chip of the old block, and all that sort of thing. What has Kate got? Oh, she's got money of her own. I used to envy her so when we were girls. I had a deal more than she had, for papa was always silly about me—dresses and jewels and so forth that I had no business to have at that age; but Kate had money of her own. I could always get plenty from papa, but she had it of her own; don't you remember, Kate? I always wished to be you; I thought that it was a shame that you should have all that left to you and me nothing. And if you come to that, so it was, for mamma was my mother as well as Kate's, and she had no business to leave her money to one of us and take no notice of me.'

'We are quits now, at all events, Stella,' said Katherine, with the best sort of a smile which she could call up on her face.

'Quits! I don't think so at all,' cried Stella, 'for you have had it and I have been kept out of it for years and years. Quits, indeed; no, I'm sure I don't think so. I have always envied you for having mamma's money since I was twelve years old. I don't deny I had more from papa; but then it wasn't mine. And now I have everything from papa, which is the least he could do, having kept me out of it for so long; but not a penny from my mother, which isn't justice, seeing I am quite as much her child as you.'

'Shut up, Stella!' said Sir Charles, in his moustache.

'Why should I shut up? It's quite true that Katherine has had it since she was fifteen; that's—let me see—fourteen years, nearly the half of her life, and no expenses to speak of. There must be thousands and thousands in the bank, and so little to do with it. She's richer than we are, when all is said.'

'Stella, you must remember,' cried Katherine excitedly in spite of herself, 'that the money in the bank was always——'

'Oh, I knew you would say that,' cried Stella in an aggrieved tone; 'you've lent it to me, haven't you? Though not so very much of it, and of course you will get it back. Oh, don't be afraid, you will get it back! It will be put among the other bills, and it will be paid with the rest. I would rather be in debt to Louise or any one than to a sister who is always thinking about what she has lent me. And it is not so very much, either; you used to dole it out to me a hundred at a time, or even fifty at a time, as if it were a great favour, while all the time you were enjoying papa's money, which by law was mine. I don't think very much of favours like that.'

'I hope, Miss Tredgold,' said Sir Charles, lifting his hat, 'that after this very great injustice, as it seems to me, you will at least make your home with us, and see if—if we can't come to any arrangement. I suppose it's true that ladies alone don't want very much, not like a family—or—or two careless spendthrift sort of people like Stella and me, but——'

'Well, of course,' cried Stella, 'I hope, Kate, you'll pay us a visit when—whenever you like, in short. I don't say make your home with us, as Charlie says, for I know you wouldn't like it, and it's a mistake, I think, for relations to live together. You know yourself, it never works. Charlie, do hold your tongue and let me speak. I know all about it a great deal better than you do. To have us to fall back upon when she wants it, to be able to write and say, take me in—which, of course, I should always do if it were possible—that is the thing that would suit Kate. Of

course you will have rooms of your own somewhere. I shouldn't advise a house, for that is such a bother with servants and things, and runs away with such a lot of money, but—— Oh, I declare, there is the Midge, with the two old cats! Shall we have to stop and speak if they see us? I am not going to do that. I heard of papa's death only yesterday, and I am not fit to speak to anybody as yet,' she cried, pulling over her face the crape veil which depended from her bonnet behind. And the two old ladies in the Midge were much impressed by the spectacle of Stella driving out with her husband and her sister, and covered with a crape veil, on the day after her return. 'Poor thing,' they said, 'Katherine has made her come out to take the air; but she has a great deal of feeling, and it has been a great shock to her. Did you see how she was covered with that great veil? Stella was a little thing that I never quite approved of, but she had a feeling heart.'

Katherine was a little sick at heart with all the talk, with Stella's rattle running through everything, with the fulfilment of all her fears, and the small ground for hope of any nobler thoughts. She was quite decided never under any circumstances to take anything from her sister. That from the first moment had been impossible. She had seen the whole position very clearly, and made up her mind without a doubt or hesitation. She was herself perfectly well provided for, she had said to herself, she had no reason to complain; and she had known all along how Stella would take it, exactly as she did, and all that would follow. But a thing seldom happens exactly as you believe it will happen; and the extreme ease with which this revolution had taken place, the absence of excitement, of surprise, even of exultation, had the most curious effect upon her. She was confounded by Stella's calm, and yet she knew that Stella would be calm. Nothing could be more like Stella than her conviction that she herself, instead of being extraordinarily favoured, was on the whole rather an injured person when all was said and done. The whole of this had been in Katherine's anticipations of the crisis. And yet she was as bitterly disappointed as if she had not known Stella, and as if her sister had been her ideal, and she had thought her capable of nothing that was not lofty and noble. A visionary has always that hope in her heart. It is always possible that in any new emergency a spirit nobler and better than of old may be brought out.

Katherine stole out in the early twilight to her favourite walk.

The sea was misty, lost in a great incertitude, a suffusion of blue-ness upon the verge of the sand below, but all besides mist in which nothing could be distinguished. The horizon was blurred all round, so that no one could see what was there, though overhead there was a bit of sky clear enough. The hour just melting out of day into night, the mild great world of space, in which lay hidden the unseen sea and the sky, were soothing influences, and she felt her involuntary anger, her unwilling disappointment, die away. She forgot that there was any harm done. She only remembered that Stella was here with her children, and that it was so natural to have her in her own home. The long windows of the drawing-room were full of light, so were those of Stella's bedroom, and a number of occupied rooms shining out into the dimness. It was perhaps *rococo*, as they said, but it was warm and bright. Katherine had got herself very well in hand before she heard a step near her on the gravel, and looking up saw that her brother-in-law was approaching. She had not been much in charity with Sir Charles Somers before, but he had not shown badly in these curious scenes. He had made some surprised exclamations, he had exhibited some kind of interest in herself. Katherine was very lonely, and anxious to think well of someone. She was almost glad to see him, and went towards him with something like pleasure.

'I have come to bring you in,' he said; 'Stella fears that you will catch cold. She says it is very damp, even on the top of the cliff.'

'I don't think I shall take cold; but I will gladly go in if Stella wants me,' said Katherine; then, as Somers turned with her at the end of her promenade, she said: 'The house is *rococo*, I know; but I do hope you will like it a little and sometimes live in it, for the sake of our youth which was passed here.'

'You don't seem to think where you are to live yourself,' he said hurriedly. 'I think more of that. We seem to be putting you out of everything. Shouldn't you like it for yourself? You have more associations with it than anyone. I wish you would say you would like to have it—for yourself——'

'Oh, no,' said Katherine, 'not for the world. I couldn't keep it up, and I should not like to have it—not for the world.'

'I am afraid all this is dreadfully unjust. There should be a—partition, there should be some arrangement. It isn't fair. You were always with the old man, and nursed him, and took care of him, and all that——'

'No,' said Katherine; 'my father was a little peculiar—he liked to have the nurse who was paid, as he said, for that. I have not any claim on that ground. And then I have always had my own money, as Stella told you. I am much obliged to you, but you really do not need to trouble yourself about me.'

'Are you really sure that is so?' he said in a tone between doubt and relief. Then he looked round, shivering a little at the mist, and said that Stella was looking for her sister, and that he thought it would be much more comfortable if they went in to tea.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE public of Sliplin gave Lady Jane the *pas*. Though every individual who had the least right of acquaintance with Lady Somers longed to call, to see how she was looking, to see how she was taking it, to see the dear babies, &c., &c., yet there was a universal consent, given tacitly, that Lady Jane, not only as the head of the local society, but as having been so deeply involved in Stella's marriage, should come first; and, accordingly, for two whole days the neighbours had refrained, even Mrs. Shanks and Miss Mildmay holding back. When Lady Jane's carriage appeared at last, there was a little rustle of interest and excitement through the place. The Stanhopes of the old Leigh House, who were half way between Steephill and Sliplin, saw it sweep past their lodge gates, and ran in in a body to say to their mother, 'Now, to-morrow we can call!' and the same sentiment flew over the place from one house to another. 'Lady Jane has just driven down to the Cliff. I have just seen Lady Jane's carriage pass on her way to see Lady Somers.' 'Well, that will be a meeting!' some ladies said. It appeared to a number of them somehow that it must have been Lady Jane's machinations that secured Mr. Tredgold's fortune for his undutiful child—though, indeed, they could not have told how.

These days of seclusion would have been very dreary to Stella had she not been occupied with her dressmaker, a visitor who is always more exciting and delightful than any other. Louise, who had insisted so on the payment of her little bill in Stella's days of humiliation, was now all obsequiousness, coming down herself to receive Lady Somers' orders, to fit Lady Somers' mourning, to

suggest everything that could be done in the way of lightening it now, and changing it at the earliest opportunity. Hours of delightful consultation as to Stella's figure, which she discussed as gravely as if it had been a matter of national importance—as well as the stuffs which were to clothe it, and the fashion in which they were to be made—flew over her head, during which time her husband mooned about the stables, generally with little Job upon his shoulder, and finally, unable to endure it any longer, went up to town, where no doubt he was happy—though the wail of the little boy left behind did not add to the peace of the house. The dressmaker had been dismissed by the time that Lady Jane arrived, and Stella sat contemplating her crape in all the mirrors round, and assuring herself that when it was perfectly fresh as now, it was not so bad, and unquestionably becoming to a very fair complexion. 'I can't say you look very well in it, Kate; you are darker, and then yours is not quite fresh. To be quite fresh is indispensable. If one was a widow, for instance, and obliged to wear it, it ought to be renewed every week; but I do think it's becoming to me. It throws up one's whiteness, don't you think? and brings out the colour,' said Stella standing before the glass. 'Oh, Kate, you are so unsympathetic; come and see what I mean,' she cried.

'Yes, I see—you look very nice, Stella. The black *is* becoming to you—but, after all, we don't wear crape to be becoming.'

'Oh, Fudge!' cried Stella, 'what do you wear it for? Because it's the custom, and you can't help yourself. What does it matter to poor papa what we wear? He always liked to see me in gay colours—he had too florid a taste, if the truth must be told. If I hadn't known better by instinct (for I'm sure I never had any teaching), and if we hadn't been so fortunate as to fall into the hands of Louise, I should have been dressed like 'Arriet out for a holiday. It's curious,' said Stella reflectively, 'taste is just born in some people and others you can't teach it to. I am so glad the first was my case. We labour under disadvantages you know, being our father's daughters—that is, not me, now everything has come straight, but you will, Kate, especially as you have not got the money. To be papa's daughter and yet not his heiress, you know, is a kind of injury to people that might come after you. You will be going into the world upon false pretences. I wonder now that you did not marry somebody before it was all known.'

'It was only known on the night of papa's funeral, Stella. I

could not have married many people between then and now,' said Katherine, trying to take this speech as lightly as it was made.

'That is true—still you must have had people after you. With your expectations, and a good-looking girl. You always were quite a good-looking girl, Kate.'

'I am grateful for your approbation, Stella.'

'Only a little stuck-up looking—and—well, not quite so young as you used to be. If I were you I would go in for that old fellow—don't you remember?—whom papa got rid of in such a hurry—the man that came over with us in the *Aurungzebe*. Somebody told me he had done very well out there, and, of course, Charlie asked him to come and see us. And you know you were his fancy, Kate; it was you, not me—don't you remember how everybody laughed? I should go in for him now if I were you. An old affair like that is quite a nice foundation. And I hear he has done very well, and he is just a suitable age, and it doesn't really matter that—— What is passing the window? Oh,' cried Stella, clapping her hands, 'the very same old landau that I remember all my life, and Lady Jane in her war paint, just the same. Let's prepare to receive cavalry!' she cried. With a twist of her hand she drew two chairs into position, one very low, graceful and comfortable for herself, another higher, with elbows for Lady Jane. And Stella seated herself, with her fresh crape falling about her in crisp folds, her fair face and frizzy locks coming out of its blackness with great *éclat*, and her handkerchief in her hand. It was as good as a play (she herself felt, for I doubt whether Katherine relished the scene) to see her rise slowly and then drop, as it were, as lightly as a feather, but beyond speech, into Lady Jane's arms, who, deeply impressed by this beautiful pose, clasped her and kissed her and murmured, 'My poor child; my poor, dear child!' with real tears in her eyes.

'But what a comfort it must be to your mind,' Lady Jane said, when she had seated herself and was holding Stella's hand, 'to feel that there could be nothing against you in his mind—no rancour, no unkindness—only the old feeling that he loved you beyond everything; that you were still his pet, his little one, his favourite——' Lady Jane herself felt it so much that she was almost choked by a sob.

'Oh, dear Lady Jane,' cried Stella, evidently gulping down her own, 'if I did not feel *that*, how could I ever have endured to

come to this house—to dear papa's house—to my own old home ! that I was so wicked as to run away from, and so silly, never thinking. My only consolation is, though Kate has so little, so very little, to tell me of that dreadful time, that he must have forgiven me at the last.'

It was a very dreadful recollection to obtrude into the mind of the spectator in such a touching scene; but Katherine could not keep out of her eyes the vision of an old man in his chair saying quite calmly, 'D— them!' as he sat by his fireside. The thought made her shudder; it was one never to be communicated to any creature; but Lady Jane perceived the little tremulous movement that betrayed her, and naturally misinterpreted its cause.

'Yes,' she said, 'my dear Stella, I am very happy for you; but there is poor Katherine left out in the cold who has done so much for him all these years.'

Stella, as was so natural to her, went on with the catalogue of her own woes without taking any notice of this. 'Such a time as we have gone through, Lady Jane! Oh, I have reflected many a time, if it had not been for what everybody told us, I never, never, would have done so silly a thing. You all said, you remember, that papa would not hold out, that he could not get on without me, that he would be quite sure to send for me home. And I was over-persuaded. India is a dreadful place. You have double pay, but, oh, far more than double expenses! and as for dress, you want as much, if not more, than you would in London, and tribes upon tribes of servants that can do nothing. And then the children coming. And Job that has never had a day's health, and how he is to live in England with a liver like a Strasburg goose and his father stuffing him with everything that is bad for him, I don't know. It has been a dreadful time; Kate has had all the good and I've had all the evil for seven years—fancy, for seven long years.'

'But you've had a good husband, at all events, Stella; 'and some pleasant things,' Lady Jane murmured in self-defence.

'Oh, Charlie! I don't say that he is any worse than the rest. But fancy me—me, Stella, that you knew as a girl with everything I could think of—going to Government House over and over again in the same old dress; and Paris diamonds that cost ten pounds when they were new.'

At this dreadful picture Lady Jane bowed her head. What could she reply? Katherine had not required to go anywhere a

number of times in the same old dress—but that was probably because she went to very few places—nor in Paris diamonds at ten pounds, for she had not any diamonds at all, false or true. To change the subject, which had taken a turn more individual than was pleasant, she asked whether she might not see the dear children?

‘Oh yes,’ said Stella, ‘if they will come—or, at least, if Job will come, for baby is too small to have a will of her own. Kate, do you think that you could bring Job? It isn’t that it is any pleasure to see him, I’m sure. When his father is here he will speak to no one else, and when his father isn’t here he just cries and kicks everybody. I think, Kate, he hates you less than the rest. Will you try and get him to come if Lady Jane wants to see him? Why anybody should want to see him I am sure is a mystery to me.’

It was an ill-advised measure on Stella’s part, for Katherine had no sooner departed somewhat unwillingly on her mission than Lady Jane seized her young friend’s hand again: ‘Oh, Stella, I must speak to you, I must, while she is away. Of course, you and Charlie have settled it between you—you are going to set everything right for Katherine? It was all settled on her side that if she got the money you should have your share at once. And you will do the same at once, won’t you, without loss of time, Charlie and you?’

‘You take away my breath,’ cried Stella, freeing her hand. ‘What is it that I have got to do in such a hurry? I hate a hurry; it makes me quite ill to be pressed to do anything like running for a train. We only came a few days ago, Lady Jane; we haven’t been a week at home. We haven’t even seen the lawyer yet; and do you think Charlie and I discuss things about money without loss of time—oh, no! we always like to take the longest time possible. They have never been such very agreeable things, I can tell you, Lady Jane, discussions about money between Charlie and me.’

‘That, to be sure, in the past,’ said Lady Jane, but not now, my dear. I feel certain he has said to you, “We must put things right for Katherine—” before now.’

‘Perhaps he has said something of the kind; but he isn’t at all a man to be trusted in money matters, Charlie. I put very little faith in him. I don’t know what the will is, as yet; but so far as I possibly can I shall keep the management of the

money in my own hands. Charlie would make ducks and drakes of it if he had his way.'

'But, my dear Stella, this is a matter that you cannot hesitate about for a moment; the right and wrong of it are quite clear. We all thought your father's money would go to Katherine, who had never crossed him in any way——'

'What does that matter? It was me he was fond of!' Stella cried, with disdain.

'Well; so it has proved. But Katherine was prepared at once to give you your share. You must give her hers, Stella—you must, and that at once. You must not leave a question upon your own sense of justice, your perception of right and wrong. Charlie!' cried Lady Jane with excitement, 'Charlie is a gentleman at least. He knows what is required of him. I shall stay until he comes home, for I must speak to him at once.'

'That is his dog-cart, I suppose,' said Stella calmly, 'passing the window; but you must remember, Lady Jane, that the money is not Charlie's to make ducks and drakes with. I don't know how the will is drawn, but I am sure papa would not leave me in the hands of any man he didn't know. I shall have to decide for myself; and I know more about it than Charlie does. Katherine has money of her own, which I never had. She has had the good of papa's money for these seven years while I have not had a penny. She says herself that she did not nurse him or devote herself to him, beyond what was natural, that she should require compensation for that. He liked the nurse that had her wages paid her, and there was an end of it; which is exactly what I should say myself. I don't think it's a case for your interference, or Charlie's, or anybody's. I shall do what I think right, of course, but I can't undertake that it shall be what other people think right. Oh, Charlie, there you are at last. And here's Lady Jane come to see us and give us her advice.'

'Hallo, Cousin Jane,' said Sir Charles, 'just got back from town, where I've had a bit of a run since yesterday. Couldn't stand it any longer here; and I say, Stella, now you've got your panoply, let's move up bag and baggage, and have a bit of a lark.'

'You are looking very well, Charlie,' said Lady Jane, 'and so is Stella, considering, and I am waiting to see the dear children. You'd better come over to us, there is some shooting going on, and you are not supposed to have many larks while Stella is in

fresh crape. I have been speaking to her about Katherine.' Here Lady Jane made a sudden and abrupt stop by way of emphasis.

'Oh, about Kate!' Sir Charles said, pulling his moustache.

'Stella doesn't seem to see, what I hope you see, that your honour's concerned. They say women have no sense of honour; I don't believe that, but there are cases. You, however, Charlie, you're a gentleman; at least you know what's your duty in such a case.'

Sir Charles pulled his moustache more than ever. 'Deuced hard case,' he said, 'for Kate.'

'Yes, there is no question about that; but for you, there is no question about that either. It is your first duty, it is the only course of action for a gentleman. As for Stella, if she does not see it, it only proves that what's bred in the bone—I'm sure I don't want to say anything uncivil. Indeed, Stella, it is only as your friend, your *relation*,' cried Lady Jane, putting much emphasis on the word, 'that I allow myself to speak.'

It cost Lady Jane something to call herself the relation of Mr. Tredgold's daughter, and it was intended that the statement should be received with gratitude; but this Stella, Lady Somers, neither felt nor affected. She was quite well aware that she had now no need of Lady Jane. She was herself an extremely popular person wherever she went, of that there could be no doubt—she had proved it over and over again in the seven years of her humiliation. Popular at Government House, popular at every station, wherever half-a-dozen people were assembled together. And now she was rich. What need she care for anyone, or for any point of honour, or the opinion of the county even, much less of a place like Sliplin? Lady Jane could no longer either make her or mar her. She was perfectly able to stand by herself.

'It is very kind of you,' she said, 'to say that, though it doesn't come very well after the other. Anyhow, I'm just as I've been bred, as you say, though I have the honour to be Charlie's wife. Lady Jane wants to see Job; I wish you'd go and fetch him. I suppose Kate has not been able to get that little sprite to come. You need not try,' said Stella calmly, when Somers had left the room, 'to turn Charlie against me, Lady Jane. He is a fool in some things, but he knows on which side his bread is buttered. If I have fifty thousand a year and he not half as many farthings, you may believe he will think twice before he goes against me. I am very proud to be your relation, of course, but it hasn't a

money value, or anything that is of the first importance to us. Kate won't be the better, but the worse, for any interference. I have my own ways of thinking, and I shall do what I think right.'

'Oh, here is the dear baby at last!' cried Lady Jane, accomplishing her retreat, though routed horse and foot, behind the large infant, looking rather bigger than the slim ayah who carried her, who now came triumphantly into the room, waving in her hand the rather alarming weapon of a big coral, and with the true air of Stella's child in Stella's house. A baby is a very good thing to cover a social defeat, and this one was so entirely satisfactory in every particular that the visitor had nothing to do but admire and applaud. 'What a specimen for India!' she cried; but this was before Job made his remarkable entrance in the dimness of the twilight, which had begun by this time to veil the afternoon light.

CHAPTER XLIV.

'Do away, me not do wid you, me fader's boy,' said little Job, as Katherine exerted her persuasions to bring him downstairs.

'That is quite true, Job; but father has not come back yet. Come downstairs with me, and we shall see him come back.'

Job answered with a kick from the little boot which had just come in somewhat muddy from a walk—a kick which, as it happened to touch a tender point, elicited from Katherine a little cry. The child backed against the ayah, holding her fast; then glared at Katherine with eyes in which malice mingled with fright. 'Me dlad to hurt you, me dlad to hurt you!' he cried. It was evident that he expected a blow.

'It is a pity to hurt anyone,' said Katherine; 'but if it has made you glad you shouldn't be cross. Come with me downstairs.'

'I hate you,' said the child. 'You punith me moment I let ayah do.'

'No, I shall not punish you. I shall only take you downstairs to see your pretty mamma, and wait till father comes back. I think I hear the dogcart now. Hark! that is your father now.'

The child ran to the window with a flush of eagerness. 'Lift me up, lift me up!' he cried. It did not matter to him who did

this so long as he got his will; and though he hit with his heels against Katherine's dress, he did not kick her again. 'Fader, fader—me's fader's boy!' cried little Job. The little countenance changed; it was no longer that of a little gnome, but caught an angelic reflection. He waved his thin small arms over his head from Katherine's arms. 'Fader, fader! Fader's tome back! Job good boy!' he cried. Then the little waving arm struck against Katherine's head, and he paused to look at her. The expression of his face changed again. A quiver of fierce terror came upon it; he was in the power of a malignant being stronger than himself. He looked at her with a sort of impotent, disappointed fury. 'Put me down, and I'll not kick you no more,' he said.

'Certainly I'll put you down. Will you come with me now and meet your father?' Katherine said.

He had his hand ready to seize her hair, to defend himself, but shrank away when she put him down without any more expressions of animosity, and ran for the head of the staircase. At that dreadful passage, however, the little creature paused. He was afraid for the descent; the hall was not yet lighted up below, and it seemed a well of darkness into which it was not wonderful that so small a being should be terrified to go down. 'Is fader there?' he said to Katherine, 'will they hurt fader?' There were vaguely visible forms in the hall, a gleam of vague daylight from the doorway, and then it became dreadfully apparent to Job that something must have happened to fader, who had disappeared within the drawing-room. 'Dhey have swallowed him up—dhey have eaten him up!' he cried. 'Oh, fader, fader!' with a frantic shout, clinging to Katherine's knees.

'No, no, my little boy. Your father has not been hurt. Come, we'll go down and find him,' Katherine said. When they were nearly at the foot of the stairs, during which time he had clung to her with a little hot grip, half piteous half painful, there suddenly sprung up in the dark hall below, at the lighting of the lamp, a gleam of bright light, and Sir Charles became visible at the foot of the stairs, coming towards them. The child gave a shriek of joy and whirled himself from the top of some half-dozen steps into his father's arms. 'You're not eated up,' he said; 'fader, fader! Job fader's boy.'

'Has he been cross?' said Sir Charles. He held the little creature in his arms lovingly, with a smile that irradiated his own heavy countenance like a gleam of sunshine.

'I hates her!' cried Job. 'I kicked her. She dot nothing to do with me.'

'Job, Job,' said the father gently, 'you shouldn't be so cross and so hasty to a kind lady who only wanted to bring you to father. If you behave like that she will never be kind to you again.'

'I don't tare. I hates ze lady,' Job said.

His father lifted his eyes and shrugged his shoulders apologetically to Katherine, and then laughed and carried his little son away. Decidedly, whatever Katherine was to make a success in, it was not in the rôle of maiden aunt.

Next day, to the distress and trouble of Katherine, early in the afternoon there came a visitor whose appearance made Stella turn towards her sister with an open-eyed look of malice and half ridicule. No; Lady Somers did not intend it so. It was a look of significance, 'I told you so,' and call upon Katherine's attention. The visitor was James Stamford, their fellow passenger by the *Aurungzebe*. He explained very elaborately that Sir Charles had given him an invitation, and that, finding himself on business of his own in the Isle of Wight, he had taken advantage of it. He was not a man who could quickly make himself at his ease. He seemed oppressed with a consciousness that he ought not to be there, that he wanted some special permission, as if it had been with some special purpose that he had come.

'Oh, you need not apologise,' said Stella; 'if you had not come then you might have apologised. We expect everybody to come to see us. Fancy, we've seen scarcely anyone for a week almost, except some old friends who have lectured us and told us what was our duty. Do you like to be told what is your duty, Mr. Stamford? I don't; if I were ever so much inclined to do it before, I should set myself against it then. That is exactly how narrow country people do; they turn you against everything. They tell you this and that as if you did not know it before, and make you turn your back on the very thing you wanted to do.'

'I don't think,' said Stamford, 'that I could be turned like that from anything I wanted to do.'

'Perhaps you are strong minded,' said Stella. 'I am not, oh, not a bit. I am one of the old-fashioned silly women. I like to be left alone and to do my own way. Perhaps it's a silly way, but it's mine. And so you have had business on the island, Mr. Stamford? Have you seen that lady again—that lady with the black eyes and the yellow hair? She will not like it at all if she doesn't see you. She was very attentive to you during the voyage. Now, you can't deny that she was attentive. She was a

great deal nicer to you than you deserved. And such a pretty woman ! To be sure that was not the natural colour of her hair. She had done something to it ; up at the roots you could see that it had once been quite dark. Well, why not, if she likes yellow hair better ? It is going quite out of fashion, so there can be no bad object in it, don't you know.'

Stella laughed largely, but her visitor did not respond. He looked more annoyed, Katherine thought, than he had any occasion to be, and her pride was roused, for it seemed to her that they both looked at herself as if the woman who had paid attention to Mr. Stamford could have anything to do with her. She changed the subject by asking him abruptly if he felt the rigour of the English climate after his long life in India.

'Yes—no, a little,' he said. 'They say that we bring so much heat with us that we do not feel it for the first year, and as I shall have to go back——'

'Are you going back ? Why should you go back ?' said Stella. 'I thought you civil servants had such good times, not ordered about like soldiers. They always said in the regiment that the civilians were so well off ; good pay and constant leave, and off to the hills whenever they liked, and all sorts of indulgences.'

'I am afraid the regiment romances,' said Stamford, 'but I do not complain. On the whole I like India. One is sure, or almost sure, of being of some use, and there are many alleviations to the climate. If that was all, I should not at all mind going out again——'

'Ah, I understand,' said Stella. And then she added quickly, 'I am so sorry I can't ask you to stay to dinner to-night. We have a grand function coming off to-night. The lawyer is coming down, and we are to hear how we stand, and how much money we are to have. I think I hear him now, and I can't let Charlie steal a march and tackle him before I am there. Katherine, will you look after Mr. Stamford till I come back ? I don't trust Charlie a step farther than I see him. He might be doing some silly thing and compromising me while I am sitting here talking, but as soon as ever I can escape I will come back.'

She rose as she spoke and gave Katherine a look—a look significant, malicious, such as any spectator might have read. Stamford had risen to open the door, and perhaps he did not see it, but it left Katherine so hot with angry feeling, so ashamed and indignant, that he could not fail but perceive it when Stella

had gone away. He looked at her a little wistfully as he took his seat again. 'I fear I am detaining you here against your will,' he said.

'Oh no,' said Katherine from the mist of her confusion, 'it is nothing. Stella has not yet got over the excitement of coming home. It has been increased very much by some—incidents which she did not expect. You have heard her story of course? They—eloped—and my father was supposed to have cut her off and put her out of his will; but it appears, on the contrary, that he has left everything to her. She only heard of papa's death, and of—this—when she got home.'

There was a little pause, and then he said reflectively, with a curious sort of regret, as if this brief narrative touched himself at some point, 'it seems, then, that fortune after all favours the brave.'

'The brave?' said Katherine surprised. 'Oh, you mean because of their running away? They have paid for it, they think, very severely in seven years of poverty in India, but now—now Stella's turn has come.'

'I quite understand Lady Somers' excitement without that. Even for myself, this house has so many recollections. The mere thought of it makes my heart beat when I am thousands of miles away. When I first came, an uncouth boy—you will scarcely remember that, Miss Tredgold.'

'Oh, I remember very well,' said Katherine, gradually recovering her ease, and pleased with a suggestion of recollections so early that there could be no embarrassment in them; 'but not the uncouthness. We were very glad to have you for a play-fellow, Stella and I.'

'She was a little round ball of a girl,' he said.

'But even then,' said Katherine, and paused. She had been about to say, 'expected to be the first,' but changed her expression, 'was the favourite of everybody,' she said.

'Ah,' said Stamford, and then pursued his recollections. 'I used to count the days till I could come back. And then came the next stage. Your father was kind to me when I was a boy. Afterwards, he was quite right, he wanted to know what I was good for.'

'He was what people call practical,' said Katherine. 'Fortunately, he did not think it necessary with us. We were accepted as useless creatures, *objets de luxe*, which a rich man could afford to keep up, and which did him more credit the gayer they were

and the more costly. Poor papa! It is not for us to criticise him, Mr. Stamford, in his own house.'

'No, indeed; but I am not criticising him. I am proving him to be right by my own example. He thought everybody could conquer fortune as he himself had done; but everybody cannot do that, any more than everybody can write a great poem. You require special qualities, which he had. Some go down altogether in the battle and are never more heard of; some do, what perhaps he would have thought worse, like me.'

'Why like you? Have you done badly? I have not heard so,' cried Katherine, with a quick impulse of interest, which she showed in spite of herself.

'I have done,' he said, 'neither well nor ill. I am of that company that Dante was so contemptuous about, don't you remember? I think he is too hard upon them, *che visser senza infamia e senza lodo*. Don't you think there is a little excuse—a little pardon for them, Miss Tredgold? The poor fellows aim at the best. They know it when they see it; they put out their hands to it, but cannot grasp it. And then what should the alternative be?'

'It is a difficult question,' said Katherine with a smile, not knowing what he would be at. He meant something, it was evident, beyond the mere words. His eyes had a strained look of emotion, and there was a slight quiver under the line of his moustache. She had not been used to discussions of this kind. The metaphysics of life had little place in the doctor's busy mind, and still less in the noisy talk of the Sir Charles Somers of existence. She did not feel herself quite equal to the emergency. 'I presume that a man who could not get the best, as you say, would have to content himself with the best he could get. At least, that is how it would come out in housekeeping, which is my sole science, you know,' she said, with a faint laugh.

'Yes,' he said, almost eagerly. 'That is perhaps natural. But you don't know how a man despises himself for it. Having once known a better way, to fall back upon something that is second or third best, that has been my way. I have conquered nothing. I have made no fortune or career. I have got along. A man would feel less ashamed of himself if he had made some great downfall—if he had come to grief once and for all. To win or lose, that's the only worthy alternative. But we nobodies do neither—we don't win, oh far from it! and haven't the heart to lose—together—'

What did he mean? To do Katherine justice, she had not the smallest idea. She kept her eyes upon him with a little curiosity, a little interest. Her sense of embarrassment and consciousness had entirely passed away.

'You are surely much too severe a judge,' she said. 'I never heard that to come to grief, as you say, was a desirable end. If one cannot win, one would at least be glad to retire decently—to make a retreat with honour, not to fling up everything. You might live then to fight another day, which is a thing commended in the finest poetry,' she added with a laugh.

He rose up and began to walk about the room. 'You crush me all the more by seeming to agree with me,' he said. 'But if you knew how I feel the contrast between what I am and what I was when last I was here! I went away from your father burning with energy, feeling that I could face any danger—that there was nothing I couldn't overcome. I found myself off, walking to London, I believe, before I knew. I felt as if I could have walked to India, and overcome everything on the way! That was the heroic for a moment developed. Of course, I had to come to my senses—to take the train, to see about my berth, to get my outfit, &c. These hang weights about a man's neck. And then, of course, I found that fate does not appear in one impersonation to be assaulted and overcome, as I suppose I must have thought, and that a civil servant has got other things to think of than fortune and fame. The soldiers have the advantage of us in that way. They can take a bold step, as Somers did, and carry out their ideal and achieve their victory——'

'Don't put such high-flown notions into my brother-in-law's head. I don't think he had any ideal. He thought Stella was a very pretty girl. They do these things upon no foundation at all, to make you shiver—a girl and a man who know nothing of each other. But it does well enough in most cases, which is a great wonder. They get on perfectly. Getting on is, I suppose, the active form of that condition—*senza lodo e senza infamia*—of which you were speaking?' Katherine had quite recovered her spirits. The Italian, the reference to Dante, had startled her at first, but had gradually re-awakened in her a multitude of gentle thoughts. They had read Dante together in the old far-past days of youth. It is one of the studies, grave as the master is, which has facilitated many a courtship, as Browning, scarcely less grave, does also. The difficulties, to lay two heads together over, are so many, and the poetry which makes the heart swell is so akin to

every emotion. She remembered suddenly a seat under one of the acacias where she had sat with him over this study. She had always had an association with that bench, but had not remembered till now that it flashed upon her what it was. She could see it almost without changing her position from the window. The acacia was ragged now, all its leaves torn from it by the wind, the lawn in front covered with rags of foliage withered and gone—not the scene she remembered, with the scent of the acacias in the air, and the warm summer sunshine and the gleam of the sea. She was touched by the recollection, stirred by it, emotions of many kinds rising in her heart. No one had ever stirred or touched her heart but this man—he, no doubt, more by her imagination than any reality of feeling. But yet she remembered the quickened beat, the quickened breath of her girlhood, and the sudden strange commotion of that meeting they had had, once and no more, in the silence of the long years. And now, again, and he in great excitement, strained to the utmost, his face and his movements full of nervous emotion, turning towards her once more.

‘Miss Tredgold,’ he said, but his lips were dry and parched. He stopped again to take breath. ‘Katherine,’ he repeated, then paused once more. Whatever he had to say, it surely was less easy than a love tale. ‘I came to England,’ he said, bringing it out with a gasp, ‘in the first place for a pretence, to bring home—my little child.’

All the mist that was over the sea seemed to sweep in and surround Katherine. She rose up instinctively, feeling herself wrapped in it, stifled, blinded. ‘Your little child?’ she said, with a strange muffled cry.

(To be continued.)

Thos. Gent, Printer.

AMONG the many mezzotints of that excellent craftsman, Valentine Green, is one which, at first sight, might easily be mistaken for a copy of Mieris or Gerard Dou. It is the portrait, framed by the stonework embrasure familiar in Dutch and Flemish art, of a man between seventy and eighty, whose abundant grey hair, unkempt as that of 'Maypole Hugh' in *Barnaby Rudge*, encroaches upon his cheeks and flows freely round his ruddy, vigorous, and—it must be owned—irascible Irish face. His well-worn coat, the dilapidations of which are reproduced by the artist with scrupulous fidelity, has a short cape, and deep sleeve-cuffs that cover the fore-arm; he wears a double vest; and he holds in his right hand a volume with unfolded frontispiece, entitled *History of the Loyal Town of Rippon*. The picture, in short, is a representation, by the York painter, Nathan Drake (father to Nathan Drake of the *Essays*), of Thomas Gent, Printer and Citizen of London, York, and Dublin, once notable for his useful topographical publications, but now remembered, if at all, by the autobiographical account of his early years which he drew up about 1746. Nothing definite, indeed, seems to have been known of his career until the discovery of this document by the Covent Garden bookseller, Thomas Thorpe, who printed it in 1832. In common with the somewhat analogous *Memoir* of Bewick the engraver, it appears to have been materially abridged by its editor, the Rev. Joseph Hunter; and those who have inspected the original MS. which, until recently, was in the possession of a now-deceased collector, Mr. Hailstone, of Walton Hall, affirm that much was omitted in addition to those initial pages of which (like the beginning of Prior's *Alma*) Time had already taken tithe. What is left, nevertheless, not only, as Southey says in his *Doctor*, 'contains much information relating to the state of the press in Gent's days, and the trade of literature,' but it also, in an old-fashioned, self-

educated way, throws light upon a curious personality in times more favourable to unfettered originality than our own. These are characteristics which should justify some account of this now not-often-encountered record.

It was 'in fair Hibernia' that Thomas Gent 'first sucked in breath,' as he poetically puts it, being born in that country of English parents, in the year 1693. At thirteen or thereabouts he was apprenticed to a Dublin printer named Powell, who seems to have possessed all the traditional disqualifications for appreciating an apprentice of parts. Consequently that apprentice, following the precedent of all traditional apprentices in similar case, ran away, and, at the third page of his mutilated memoirs, is discovered hiding in the hold of a ship bound for England, hopelessly sick, and having about fourteenpence in his pocket. When they arrived in the Dee (this was in August 1710), the poor boy tremulously offered his waistcoat to the skipper in payment for his passage. But the captain, whose name was Wharton, being, by good luck, more like Captain Coram of the Foundling than those brutal ship-masters under whom Silas Told sailed out of Bristol City, not only addressed him as 'pretty lad,' and gave him excellent fatherly advice of the best story-book kind, but in addition presented him with his blessing and sixpence. He was then landed, still faint and dizzy, at Parkgate; and it may be noted, in passing, that it was in riding from this very Parkgate towards Chester, about three weeks later, that Jonathan Swift, Vicar of Laracor, Prebendary of Dunlavin, and apparently an indifferent cavalier to boot, fell off his horse. From Parkgate Thomas Gent also set out for Chester, but on foot, his *compagnons de voyage* being a fat Englishwoman, travelling *par amours* with an anchor smith, and another couple, passing for man and wife. The party admired the old town of Chester, and the 'celebrated river Dee,' where Gent's memory afterwards taught him to remember that 'the famous King Edgar was rowed by eight tributary kings'; but finding no work was to be had in that place, they pushed forward to London. At first Mr. Powell's runaway apprentice was called Mr. Tommy, 'by way of eminence.' His companions, however, soon discovered his penniless condition, and promptly degraded him to the rank of baggage-bearer in ordinary. Worse than this, they brought discredit upon him by their unsportsmanlike proceedings, for they knocked down a goose in a roadside pond, and then obliged him to wade for the body. 'But,' comments Gent, grimly, 'these, my now crooked friends, got no good by their hungry theft,' for when,

at a convenient place, the goose was boiled, it was found to be 'almost as tough as parchment itself.'

Journeying farther southward, the travellers came up with a company of foot on their way to embark for Spain. (The year 1710, it will be remembered, was the year of that 'glorious disaster' of Brihuega, when Stanhope's eight battalions surrendered to Vendôme.) The soldiers had a recruiting sergeant with them, and a thin-jawed officer upon a horse as lean as Rozinante. Gent's male companions were at once annexed by 'Sergeant Kite,' but he himself, dropping his bundle without ado, beat a precipitate retreat. One of the new recruits, who had been himself entrapped, was speedily sent after him, and, pitying his condition, opened a way of escape. 'The officer,' he said, 'will ride up to you, as I depart on one side; you may seem to agree with what he says, by bidding you live, as his men do, along with them; but rise up early next morning, and make the best of your way from us.' Gent acted usefully and successfully on this timely counsel. The officer, however, overtook him next day; but beyond warning him that, 'in spite of his teeth,' he would assuredly be pressed in London, made no further attempt to induce him to trail a pike for Queen Anne. What became of the two women history sayeth not. Probably, like the lady in the *Jolly Beggars*, they followed their 'sodger laddies'—at all events to the port of departure. Meanwhile Gent tramped on alone to St. Albans, where, faint and footsore, he halted 'at the Sign of St. Catherine's Wheel.' Two-pence constituted his entire funds, but the landlord and his wife—and it says much for the boy's prepossessing appearance, or power of inspiring pity—gave him food and lodging for nothing.

Here, unfortunately, there is a gap of a page in the manuscript. When it begins again Gent has found employment in that Parnassus of farthing poets, Pye Corner, with Edward Midwinter, a printer of ballads and broadsheets. He has also recently renewed acquaintance with a former schoolfellow, named Levintz (the son of an Irish judge), who, having finished his studies at St. Paul's School, was at this time preparing to start upon a tour in the East. Before his departure, young Levintz, 'being tall, exceedingly beautiful,' and of 'a fine address,' found it easy to persuade Madam Midwinter to give his friend an occasional holiday, when, 'in many pleasant arbours,' at Islington, Newington, Pancridge, and other towns' [!], he treated Gent to 'wine, cider, ale, and cakes,' seasoned by suitable talk of their 'juvenile actions.' Then Levintz set out on his travels, and his companion

saw him no more. With Midwinter, working often, through 'hurry with hawkers,' from five in the morning till twelve at night, and not without one or two skirmishes, arising out of what he describes in his queer language as the 'authentic nonsense,' and 'unreasonable contempt,' of his fellow-servants, Gent remained till he was 'about twenty.' The date is more precisely fixed by the fact that one of his last duties was to take down the substance of the 'long, dull sermon' (as Swift styles it to Stella) which, on March 29, 1713, Dr. Henry Sacheverell preached at St. Saviour's, Southwark, after his three years' silence. This very unauthorised version—since, according to Swift, the Doctor had already himself sold the copyright of his discourse to a bookseller for 100*l.*—kept Gent waiting patiently at the church for several hours before the service began, but it brought in one week some 30*l.* gain to the Midwinter household. Shortly afterwards, and somewhat to his surprise, Gent was released from his 'prentice-hood. Having thus got his liberty, he proceeded to expend the solitary sixpence he possessed in purchasing a copy of Ayres's *Arithmetic* at a Moorfields bookstall—a piece of extravagance which, for that day at least, obliged him, in his own phrase, 'to dine with Duke Humphrey.' But before sundown, he had found work in Fetter Lane with a Quaker widow named Bradford. Here, applying himself closely to his craft, he rapidly earned enough to set himself up with tools. 'I furnished myself,' he says, 'with a new composing iron, called a stick, because anciently that useful material [implement] was made of wood; a pair of scissors, to cut scale boards [*i.e.* thin strips of wood for obtaining close register in printing]; a sharp bodkin, to correct the letter; and a pretty sliding box, to contain them, and preserve all from rustiness.' 'I bought also a galley [to hold type], for the pages I was to compose, with other appurtenances that might be of service to me when occasion should require.'

With 'that knowing gentlewoman,' Mrs. Bradford, Gent might have remained happily. But being 'over fond of novelty,' he was foolish enough to leave her service upon the invitation of a Blackfriars printer named Mears. Here the ceremonious character of his admission seemed to augur exceptional advantages. Being first kindly permitted to pay the usual 'Ben-money' (*benvenue* or *bienvenue*-money, a tribute approximating very closely to the 'garnish' of Lockit in the *Beggar's Opera*), he was, in consideration thereof, initiated into the mysterious rites of 'Cuzship.' The proceedings began by a solemn procession round the 'chapel,' a name which

printing-rooms are said to derive from Caxton's first workshop in Westminster Abbey. This was accompanied by the performance of an alphabetical anthem, 'tuned literally to the vowels,' after which the kneeling neophyte was stricken with a broadsword, ale was poured over him, and he was saluted by the titles of 'Thomas Gent, baron of College Green, earl of Fingall, with power to the limits of Dublin bar, captain-general of the Teagues, near the lake of Allen, and lord high admiral over all the bogs in Ireland'—titles which at least exhibit a certain ingenuity of nomenclature. But alas! for human grandeur, all this purchased dignity proved no more than the 'prologue to an egg and butter,' since a week or two later, not being yet a freeman, he was discharged as 'a foreigner.' As, in the circumstances, he was justly ashamed to apply to his old mistress, he became a 'smouter,' or 'grass-hand,' that is to say, he took odd jobs. This, upon the whole, proved more profitable than the promises of 'Cuzship,' and afforded him a tolerable subsistence.

After some months of this desultory work, much of which must have been done for his old Smithfield employer, Midwinter, an offer came to Gent from John White, who, because he had printed the Declaration of William of Orange when it was refused by all the London presses, had in 1689 been made King's printer for the city of York and the five northern counties. White offered eighteen pounds a year, 'besides board, washing, and lodging'—an offer which Gent accepted. Finding that it would cost him about five-and-twenty shillings to get to York by waggon, he set out, with the guinea allowed for his charges safe in his shoelining, to make the journey on foot. This he began on Tuesday, April 20, 1714. With a chance lift on a led-horse, and the usual delay from losing his road, he reached York on the following Sunday. Two coincidences signalled his arrival in 'ancient Ebor's city'—one being that his first inquiry for White was made at a house at Petergate which afterwards became his own; the other that White's door was opened to him by the 'upper or head maiden' of the establishment, one Mistress Alice Guy, a young woman of 'very good natural parts, quick understanding, a fine complexion, and very amiable in her features,' who afterwards, but not until she had first become a widow, bestowed her hand upon him. He narrates nothing of importance while in York save hearing the proclamation of King George I. from the steps of York Cathedral. In the dearth of printers, however—for at this time, except in London, they were few and far between—

White's hands were always full, and his journeyman had prospered so much by the end of the year that he was able to purchase a watch and chain of 'Mr. Etherington, a Quaker, in High Ouse Gate,' for six guineas. In April, 1715, from causes apparently connected with the indiscreet revelation by a compatriot of the fact that he had run away from his first master, he quitted White's service, and after relieving himself of the 'melancholy humour' induced by this mishap in some very pedestrian verses, set out to visit his friends in Ireland. Already Mrs. White's 'head maiden' must have regarded him with favour, for she gave him a little dog as a road companion; but, although there was a rival in the field, in the shape of his master's grandson, Gent's prudence seems to have overmastered his affections.

Sea-voyages under the first Georges were wearisome affairs, and one remembers how it took Henry Fielding seven weeks to get from the Thames to the Tagus. Gent was only going from York to Dublin, but he was not at once to reach his destination. He started on May 15. Progressing modestly as what Mrs. Nosebag in *Waverley* calls a 'foot-wobbler,' he made his way through Yorkshire and Lancashire to Liverpool. At Liverpool he would have halted had work offered. Failing this, he took ship in the *Betty* galley, Captain Briscoe, then waiting at Parkgate for a wind. Starting next day, the weather obliged them at nightfall to put into a creek near Holyhead. Here, unhappily, the captain took on board one Mr. Dubourdieu, a 'tall, swarthy, venerable, and pious' clergyman of 'the Episcopal French Church in the Cathedral dedicated to St. Patrick, in Dublin.' This clerical addition to the passenger-list the crew considered to be of evil omen; and, as ill-luck would have it, a fearful storm that followed seemed to justify their forebodings. For some days the *Betty* was beaten about by the waves, running at last for shelter to Douglas, Isle of Man. At Douglas they remained considerably more than a week, waiting for fair weather. Gent found lodgings on shore with a last-maker, who, 'besides, was very acute in making viols,' and he records that, until prices were raised by the arrival of other vessels in distress, you could buy at Douglas 'a good pullet for fourpence, and a quart of strong brandy for an English shilling.' These advantages failed, however, to relieve his melancholy thoughts, which (he says) now 'inspired him with a sort of poetical genius to contemplate on the unsettled affairs of this transitory life.' How much this was promoted by his attendance at a sermon over a suicide and by a theological dispute

with an infidel exciseman possessed of 'a sort of mathematical turn,' is unexplained; but it does not seem to have been succeeded by the threatened metrical attack. At last the *Betty* set sail, and got safe to Dublin Harbour, to the delight of many besides Gent's father and mother, who had concluded her lost with all hands. He was, of course, warmly welcomed by the old people and by his numerous nephews and nieces. One of these latter, Anne Standish, he describes, not only as 'a perfect beauty,' but a very modest and pious young gentlewoman. 'Often did we walk till late hours in the garden; she could tell me almost every passage in *Cassandra*, a celebrated romance that I had bought for her in London' (and which, it may be observed, that sagacious critic, Mr. Samuel Pepys, much preferred to *Hudibras*). At this date it was four years to the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*, which Gent was hereafter to abridge, and twenty-five to *Pamela*. Neither Defoe nor Richardson had yet displaced the sempiternal Seigneur de la Calprenède, whom Mistress Anne probably studied in that version of Sir George Cotterel afterwards illustrated by Hogarth.

At Dublin Gent would doubtless have settled, having engaged himself as journeyman to a printer in Copper Alley. But to this unexpected obstacles presented themselves from the action of his first master, Powell, who endeavoured to re-possess himself of the person of his runaway apprentice. As Powell proved intractable, Gent, reflecting philosophically that even 'the best of men had their troubles, nay, that King George himself just then had an unnatural rebellion raised in his kingdom' (an obvious reference to the first Jacobite rising), decided once more to flee his native country—a resolve in which he was possibly fortified by the receipt of 'a letter from his dearest, at York.' On July 8, 1715, he left Ireland, and on the 12th reached Parkgate, whence, in a market boat 'mostly filled with a parcel of lovely damsels,' he made his way from Eastham Ferry to Liverpool. Again a chasm occurs in the manuscript, which must be filled with a residence in York, where in January 1716 his master John White died, leaving his business to his widow and grandson and forty shillings to his maid-servant, Alice Guy. In 1716 Gent was once more in London, working for Midwinter, and corresponding with his 'dear,' whom he had again been ill-judged enough to leave single, seeing that her other admirer was the very grandson, Charles Bourne, to whom White's business was to fall. In the following year he was made a Member of the Stationers'

Company, and a freeman of the City. About the same time news came from Dublin that Powell had compounded his claims for 5*l.*; and thus his old apprentice became absolutely free. Joy, like grief, seems to have disposed Thomas Gent to 'drop into poetry,' and 'thinking of his kind usage in the Isle of Man,' he fell to versify the attractions of that favoured spot. One wonders if Mr. Hall Caine has ever met with this artless performance! 'What,' writes the poet, concerning the Manx children—

'What tho' they barefoot walk upon the sand,
To save their shoes,—How pleasing is the strand!' &c.

And he praises the cheapness of the provisions, and the absence of sectarianism:—

'No Papists here, or Presbyterians dwell
Within your isle, as I am informed well.'

Towards the close, he apostrophises Lord Nairne, who, after his reprieve, had apparently been banished to the island for his share in the rebellion. Gent regards him as exceptionally fortunate in his place of exile:—

'Let him, then, bless King George. Nairne cannot crave
What's fit for man but he in MAN may have:
Doth he want liquor that is strong and stout?
No better brandy in the world throughout:
There good and wholesome beer and ale is found,
There foreign products plenteously abound;'

and so forth, the conclusion of the matter being that he may, for *summum bonum*,

'Live near the bishop, in fam'd Castle Town,
And, acting well, not value mortal's frown.'

The 'Bishop' was, of course, that worthy and pious Thomas Wilson, who fills so large a part in the story of the Manx Church, and whom Gent had actually seen presiding as judge at a visitation of the clergy. But he must have been 'ill' not 'well' informed as to the Papists, since the good prelate's biographer, in speaking of his toleration, specially refers to them. 'The Papists who resided in the island loved and esteemed him, and not unfrequently attended his sermons and prayers.'

Qualified to obtain employment, and equipped with a sweetheart, as Gent now was, it might be imagined that his aspirations would tend in the direction of wedlock. But though he 'entirely loved the young woman'—Alice Guy to wit—he

dreaded the responsibilities and expenses of the married state. He continued to labour unremittingly at his craft, taking little care for aught else, or he might (as he says), 'on play nights, have seen Prince George and Princess Caroline visiting the theatre.' But his old 'over-fondness for novelty' led him often to change his masters. From Midwinter he passed to Wilkins of Little Britain, who printed the *Whitehall Evening Post*; from Wilkins again to John Watts, whose name figures with that of Jacob Tonson on so many title-pages. Then, in a fit of despondency over his prospects, he practically broke off his engagement with Alice Guy, and set out, not without misgivings, to visit his parents in Dublin, renewing with Anne Standish, 'in a garden . . . near the Strand,' the old *Cassandra* talk 'of history, travels, and the transactions of the most illustrious personages of both sexes.' 'Now and then,' he adds, 'when she would touch of their love, I believe, to know if I had ever felt its unerring dart, my dearest in England quickly recurred to my wandering thoughts, and filled my heart with such strong emotions, that my sudden sighs could not but reveal my inward trouble, which did not pass by unobserved, though I strove to hide them.' He was, however, soon back again in London, where, after a short interval with Watts, he cast in his fortunes with one Francis Clifton, a Roman Catholic, who had been educated at Oxford. Much of Clifton's work was done for members of his unpopular faith, who 'financed' him; but he was always in difficulties, and always in fear of the 'shoulder-dabbers.' Finally, both he and his staff, Gent included, moved into the sheltering Liberties of the Fleet, where they were at least relieved from apprehension. They must, however, have been but poorly accommodated, since, by Gent's account, their only printing-room, in all weathers, was often nothing better than a mean shed adjoining the prison wall, where rain and snow fell in turn upon the cases. But Clifton contrived to pay his men; and brisk trade, the encouragement of 'the wide-mouthed stentorian hawkers,' and the occasional solace of 'a glass of good ale,' made life endurable. Now and then came commissions of a mysterious kind. Once Gent and his master were ordered to carry the worked-off sheets of a pamphlet to 'a large sort of monastic building,' in Westminster, where they were visited in a spacious chamber by 'a grave gentleman in a black lay habit,' who chatted pleasantly, treated them to a bottle of wine, and then politely but plainly enjoined the strictest secrecy. Neither master nor man knew the name of his employer. But not very long

afterwards, in the drawn features of a State prisoner going in a guarded coach to the Tower, the obscure 'smouter' of the Fleet recognised his courteous and hospitable entertainer, and learnt that he was none other than that finished gentleman and factious politician, Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester.

But business with Jacobite prelates, who were friends of Bolingbroke and Swift, was a hazardous distinction even in an already sufficiently hazardous calling. Almost the next thing which Gent records is the trial at the Old Bailey of a mere boy named John Matthews, who, having been convicted of printing a seditious libel in favour of the Pretender, entitled *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*, was drawn on a sledge from Newgate to Tyburn, and executed. 'I beheld him,' says Gent, 'as I stood near St. Sepulchre's Church; his clothes were exceeding neat, the lining of his coat a rich Persian silk, and every other thing as befitted a gentleman. I was told he talked, like a philosopher, of death, to some young ladies who came to take their farewell, and suffered with a perfect resignation.' This was in November 1719. Little more than a year later, Gent himself had a narrow escape of quitting this world by 'the steps and the string,' otherwise the gallows. He was suddenly arrested by a King's messenger, on suspicion of treasonable printing, and with several others hurried into hold at Manchester Court (Cannon Row, Westminster), then used for the temporary confinement of political prisoners. Fortunately, nothing could be proved against him, and he was honourably discharged. At this date he had left Clifton, and gone back to Midwinter. In a small way he was prospering. He had acquired some experience as a reporter of assize trials; he had saved a little money and bought some furniture and some founts of type. When he was released from prison he set up a press of his own near the Two Fighting Cocks in Fleet Lane (still, it would seem, within the 'sweet security' of the Liberties), and began to think once more of his York sweetheart. But 'he who wills not when he may' runs risks. Almost simultaneously with the first definite beams of better fortune came tidings that Alice Guy had become Alice Bourne. As of old, Gent sought solace in song, producing, to the popular tune of 'Such Charms has Phillis,' &c., a lengthy ballad, 'proper for the flute,' upon which instrument he was a performer. This effusion, in which he posed—rather unfairly, looking to the circumstances—as a 'forsaken' lover, he presented to Mr. Dodd, a master printer, who sold thousands of it in broad-sheet form. But Gent, with a nicer sense of fitness than he had

shown in the composition of the verses, though he was not averse from the gift of 'a glass of comfort or so,' declined to receive any money payment for his 'melodious tear.'

It was in June, 1721, that Alice Guy was married, and her half-hearted admirer was consequently still under thirty. His ballad for the flute was not his first appearance as a printed author, since, two years before, Clifton had issued for him a Hudibrastic poem, entitled *Teague's Ramble*, in which he satirised some of his craft 'who had used him unkindly.' For Midwinter he abridged, in 1722, the three parts of the then recent *Robinson Crusoe*, adorning the same with thirty rude wood-cuts in the text, designed by himself. Besides this, from his Fleet Lane press he put forth ballads and broadsides on his own account. He also issued a collection of songs 'for the Summer's Entertainment,' a treatise on *Preparation for Death*, and a book of Emblems based on Quarles, and the *Pia Desideria* of Herman Hugo. Moreover, the better to justify the title of 'High Flyer' given to him by malicious rivals, he struck off for an old schoolfellow a Latin Ode on the Return of King George the First from Germany, with all the ceremony of an orthodox imprint: *Londini, typis Thomæ Gent in vico vulgo dicto Fleet-lane, pro usu authoris, ann. 1724*. But the bulk of his business lay in Cock-pit bills, and such 'Last Dying Speeches' as one meets with in Hogarth's prints. One of these was that of a certain Counsellor Christopher Layer, who was executed for high treason. This, which Gent expanded from a few words into a handsome valedictory oration, had such a run that, for about three days, the 'wide-mouthed stentorian hawkers' were ready to pull his press to pieces in their eagerness for copies. At such times as he could not get enough work for himself he jobbed for others—for the first of the Woodfalls, and for the yet undistinguished Samuel Richardson, of Salisbury Court, then engaged with Woodfall in printing a polyglot Dictionary. With one of his temporary employers, the new-made widow of the Dodd above mentioned, it seems probable that he might have entered into a double partnership, when news arrived suddenly that, by the death of her husband, his old sweetheart was free. Upon this occasion Gent took time by the forelock. He saw plainly that he must 'not trifle with a widow, as he had formerly done with a maid,' and, making such excuses as occurred to him, he set off without delay, not on foot as of old, but by the stage which started from the Black Swan in Holborn, and carried him to York in four days. Here he

found his 'dear' once more, but much altered. 'There was no need for new courtship; but decency suspended the ceremony of marriage for some time'—to be exact, for a little over three months. They were married at York Minster on December 10, 1724.

With his marriage Gent brings to a close Part I. of his *Life*, and accomplishes about three-fourths of his book (as we have it). Like most of its class, and here again it resembles that *Memoir* of Bewick to which it has already been compared, the concluding part is the least fruitful in incident and interest. To all appearance his fortune was made. He had married the woman of his choice, and, what was more, had married a business as well. Where he had been a servant, he now was a master. But these advantages were not without their drawbacks. His wife had somehow lost her old amiability of disposition, and his own temper was bad. There was war with his wife's uncle, a printer at Newcastle, who not only brought out a *York Courant* in opposition to Gent's *York Journal*, but set up a rival press as well in York itself. Other presses followed in the vicinity, and the once prosperous business established by White, and inherited by Bourne, began perceptibly to decline. All this tended to embarrass Gent, to embroil him with those about him, and to salt the second portion of his record with a good many doleful ejaculations and vindictive utterances. Nevertheless, for more than forty years he continued to print and to produce, and it is to this period of his life that his most memorable work belongs. The long list of the books he issued may be read, to the profit of the inquirer, in such official records as Davies' *Memoir of the York Press*. Of those with which he is directly associated as author or compiler, his topographical efforts are the best. These, which he commenced in order to supplement his failing business, were heralded in 1730 by the little octavo entitled the *Antient and Modern History of the Famous City of York*. He followed up this in 1733 by the *Antient and Modern History of the Loyal Town of Rippon*, and to this again succeeded, two years later, the *History of the Royal and Beautiful Town of Kingstown-upon-Hull*. That these volumes make no pretence to compete with the copious, copper-plated quartos of the Drakes and Thoresbys of their writer's day need scarcely be said. The type deserves that stigma of 'scurvy letter' once applied to Steele's *Tatler*; the style is poor and prolix; the 'portraitures and views' (as the author confesses) sadly wanting in the 'prospective.' But

he had many qualifications for his task. He was interested himself, and he tried to interest his reader; he made personal inquiries wherever he could; he risked his neck in the investigation of stained glass, and he was indefatigable in copying out epitaphs and inscriptions. This last of itself is almost enough to give his work an independent value. Occasionally he had collaborators. The *History of Rippon*, for example, is introduced by a poem on the 'Surprising Beauties of Studley Park,' by Mr. Peter Aram, a gardener. The verses are less remarkable than the fact that this was the father of Hood's hero, who, as 'Mr. Eugenius Aram,' figures in the 'List of Subscribers.' And here, by the way, it may be noted that, under the year 1741, the *Memoir* contains a brief reference to another well-known person, the new Prebendary of York, Mr. Laurence Sterne, who succeeded one of Gent's patrons, the Rev. Robert Hitch. Gent may, indeed, have witnessed Sterne's marriage in the cathedral on the preceding Easter Monday. But it is, perhaps, more curious still, in this connection, that one of the earliest of the pamphlets which Gent printed was dedicated to Daniel Draper, Esq.; afterwards a Bombay Counsellor, and the husband of the 'Bramine' of that curious sentimental Journal by 'Mr. Yorick,' the original of which is now to be seen at the British Museum.

In a rude copperplate prefixed to some of his works, Gent is shown sitting in his printing-room at Petergate, a gray-haired old man, with a flageolet at his side, a music-book on his knees, and a fiddle and bow upon the wall. 'Having but too much time to spare, rather than be indolent I studied music on the harp, flute, and other instruments,' he writes in 1737. Over his head, on a shelf surmounting a row of unnamed smaller volumes, are the three books mentioned above, together with three others, to which, from their prominence, it must be assumed that he attached a special importance. They are the *Histories of England and Rome*, both issued in 1741, and the *Most Delectable, Scriptural, and Pious History of the famous and magnificent Great Eastern Window in St. Peter's Cathedral, York*, 1762—the last-named, which is copiously (and deplorably) illustrated by 'wooden cuts,' being long delayed in its production by the author's want of means. His fortunes were already steadily on the wane when he concluded his *Memoir* in 1746. But they must have got worse in the years that remained, for in February, 1761, while the *Great Eastern Window* was still at press, he was reduced to speak a Prologue and Epilogue to a representation, for his benefit, by

puppets or fantoccini, of Rowe's tragedy of *Jane Shore*. This 'pathetick Prologue' and 'benedictive Epilogue of Thanks' he subsequently published with the characteristic title of *The Contingencies, Vicissitudes, or Changes of this transitory Life*. 'Strange,' the Prologue begins—

'Strange, that a Printer, near worn out thro' age,
Should be impell'd, so late, to mount the stage !
In silver'd Hairs, with Heart nigh fit to break,
Thus to amuse, who scarce has words to speak.'

And it goes on to dwell feelingly on his forlorn position. Between the delivery of these two addresses and their appearance in type, he had further evidence of life's vicissitudes, for his wife died, an event which he records in his own characteristic way. 'It was,' he says, 'on Wednesday, April 1, 1761, N.S., between the hours of x and xi in the night that my beloved dear, Mrs. Alice Gent, meekly resigned up her precious soul (that curious and unsearchable particle of Divinity) to its Maker; leaving me in a disconsolate Condition.' He survived her for seventeen years, it is to be feared in extreme indigence, and often subsisting upon what one account calls 'eleemosynary offers of meat and drink.' He might early have had parochial relief, but he clung tenaciously to his old books, his scanty household goods, and his house at Petergate, where, in May 1778, he died, aged 86. In his will he had desired to be buried near the remains of his 'dear' at St. Olave, Marygate. But the executor renounced his office; and he was laid in the parish church of St. Michael-le-Belfrey, 'where,' adds Davies, 'more than fifty years before, he and his wife had wept together over the grave of their infant and only child.'

AUSTIN DOBSON.

A Winter's Day in Mid-forest.

IT does not sound very cheery and inviting, I know ; the reader would probably reply, if asked how he would like to spend the whole of a winter day in the middle of a pine forest, that there are few things he would not prefer to such an occupation. Fancy, he would say, the cold of it, and the dreariness and monotony of an eternity of pine trees stretching away on every side to the vanishing point. Is there any one who would care to spend such a day as has been suggested, with the certainty of being half, if not entirely frozen, and a fair chance of being eaten up by wolves or rendered idiotic by the hopeless dullness ? Could any sane person be found ready to leave the comforts of town, the cosy armchair by the fire, and the book or periodical, in order to spend a number of miserable hours shivering on snow-shoes beneath the snow-laden branches of a million pine trees ?

Without entering into the question of the sanity of the proceeding, I unreservedly affirm that I, for one, would gladly and readily devote a day to such an enterprise—ay, any day, any hour ! You, reader, who have not, perhaps, had the opportunity of seeing the sights which I am now about to describe, may well be excused for receiving the above statement with a smile of incredulity and amusement ; for, as I have already admitted, it does not sound a very cheery and inviting programme for a day's occupation. Nevertheless I, who have seen all that I tell of many times, know well that there are few ways of spending a fine February day more delightfully and profitably than in mid-forest, upon snow-shoes of course, and without extraneous assistance other than, if possible, a kindred spirit for companion, an open heart, and a good gun over the shoulder ; for then, if you keep your eyes open also and your mind ready to receive the impressions which will come crowding into it, you will find plenty to occupy you and to keep you amused and happy as the hours go by.

First of all there is the sunshine. There is always a sense of exhilaration in the first plucky efforts of the spring sun to free the long-suffering earth from the tyranny of winter. But when you are conscious of frost in the air sufficiently potent to send the mercury cowering down into the depths of the thermometer several degrees below zero, and mark that brave sun-god—no whit afraid of meeting the frost-demon upon his own ground—suddenly come smiling through the death-like chilliness of the atmosphere, like a broad visitation of cheerful hope into the realms of black despair, it is enough to make you laugh and sing. What though those plucky rays can as yet do little or nothing in active opposition to the power of the enemy?—the sun is going to fight on, day by day, until he has vanquished and put to flight the old despot now sitting tight, like black fate, upon the shoulder of his prisoner, earth. He puts heart of grace into all things animate and inanimate; they know him well, and when they see him coming smiling over the land they take courage, for it is the beginning of the end. It is as though the sun cried: 'Patience, poor pine trees, a little while longer, only a little while; for I am young and feeble, but I shall grow stronger daily, and presently I shall come and engage the enemy with a might which is irresistible, then I shall be the king and my foes must perish, and there shall be joy once more over the forest!'

So day after day the February sun struggles heroically with the frost, gaining a little now, and again losing ground. Gradually he disarms the enemy, whose snow armour begins to show signs of wear as the month goes on. At night the frost-demon repairs the ravages of the day and presents a bolder front at morning than at evening. He is busy in the darkness, like other rogues. But his eventual discomfiture is certain and all the forest people know it, and this is why they all rejoice and put on their best appearance when the popular hero comes out to fight during those still cruelly cold days of the February month. Just look at the forest—if you had been here a month or two ago, say during the dismal, dreary month of December or the first half of January, how different everything would have appeared! There would have stretched before your eyes an eternal and depressing vista of dark, sombre, melancholy-looking pines, bent and groaning beneath snow burdens—silent, grim, hopeless; beings given over to the tyranny of a hated despot and tyrant, devoid of the hope of brighter days, forgotten by the old champion of last year—the sun-god, who died in October, and can do no more, apparently, to

help his poor *protégés*! See it now. Look at those same pines now! Did ever human eye behold anything more beautiful in the way of the metamorphosing effect of a ray or two of sunlight? They have almost rid themselves of their snow-burdens, for the winter winds have pitied them, and, by gently swaying their gaunt bodies backwards and forwards, have gradually helped them to cast away their oppressive bondage.

A few particles of fresh snow fell during the night and the trees are one and all covered this morning with a delicate fringe of rime, which pencils out each point and needle of every little twig up to the extremest tip-top of every pine tree of the millions that surround us; a garment of beauty than which nothing can be conceived more lovely. The rays of the sun have got hold of these rime-embroidered pine fringes, and see what they have made of them! Is there a filigree worker in all India who could have done this thing? Let him look upon the handiwork of Jeweller Sun and say whether he could produce anything approaching the delicacy and beauty of these tiny twigs and needles, traced, every one of them, with perfect distinctness in the most exquisite of silver filigree set in myriads of sparkling diamonds.

Under foot there is further evidence of the skill of this same jeweller. Far as the dazzled eye can see he has transformed the snow particles with that magic touch of his and converted each into a brilliant of the purest water. The splendour of them is almost intolerable, and we shall probably be obliged to improvise sunshades if we are to pass the whole day in his too gorgeous effulgence.

Then the air. Talk, or rather don't talk of ozone, champagne, or of any such hackneyed means of exhilaration; these are all very well in their way; but where is the brand of champagne to equal the crisp February air of the pine forest for putting life and spirit into a man? Stand and breathe it awhile, saturated as it is with sunlight and laden with the intoxicating delight of absolute purity, and wholesome, bracing, and vigorous with the energy which the united action of hard frost, brilliant sunshine, and the smell of the pines alone can give it. Standing and breathing such air as this, the main difficulty is to keep quiet and not give way to an insane desire to dance about on one's snow-shoes and sing wild songs; for it won't do to indulge in that sort of thing, because our mission is to remain silent and hidden in order that we may watch and see what life, if any, is going on in this vast still forest, that seems at first sight so empty and lonely and devoid of every form of active existence.

Yet, if we resist the desire to laugh and sing and move about, and if we stand still and endure the cold awhile, we shall see that there is no lack of life around us; the forest is teeming with it, though it is revealed slowly and by degrees, and beginning, perhaps, with nothing more important than our discovery of a field-mouse. Look at him! he has appeared from goodness knows where, goodness knows why! Surely he would be wiser to stay comfortably at home far away beneath the snow, in this bitter cold weather! Yet he must needs come out and run about all over our snow-shoes and carefully inspect our felt boots; he sniffs at them and runs away a short distance over the crusted snow and returns to sniff again and yet again; they are evidently of the greatest interest to him, since he cannot make up his mind to leave them and proceed with his morning's engagements and duties, whatever these may be. Probably he is reflecting that here, by the merest piece of good fortune, he has happened upon the very material for his spring nest that he has been on the lookout for for weeks! What lovely soft stuff! he thinks; so warm too—the very thing of all others the missus would approve of! At which thought away he scuttles to fetch that lady. If we like to wait long enough he will presently return with her, and together they will sit awhile in judgment over the newly found material for prospective nest-making. A slight movement of the foot is enough to put all domestic ideas to flight, together with the happy couple themselves, and away they scuttle together over the snow-diamonds, the missus perhaps indulging in sarcastic personalities as to the wisdom of gentlemen field-mice, who bring their wives out into the cold in order to show them nothing more practical than a length of locomotive material; a truly gentleman-like idea of a valuable discovery, and a nice sort of stuff, indeed, by way of a nest to bring up the children in! Let us move on a little further, for it is impossible in this cold to stay in one spot very long at a time. At the first sign of a living creature we will hide ourselves again.

We are not permitted to enjoy much exercise. There comes a whirring of wings and we retire behind two pine-stems. Like bolts from the blue two birds come darting with lightning rapidity through the trees; they flash past us and settle in one instant almost over our very heads—a pair of beady-eyed tree-partridges, the tamest birds that fly and some of the swiftest. Probably they see us just as plainly as we see them, but they don't mind. On the contrary, they treat us with quite marked disregard, for they

immediately begin to attend to their toilette as though they were unobserved. They sit and preen their dark grey feathers, now and again lifting a wing and digging into the recess beneath it with fierce determination, as though they feel that they have borne with those untidy little feathers long enough, and will put up with them no longer; either they shall lie straight, or out they come! Now, the wing feathers being adjusted, they bend their necks or screw them round, and attend to other uneven or ruffled surfaces. One or two of the badly-behaved little plumelets elect to come out rather than submit to discipline, and flutter in the bright air for a moment or two ere they lazily float down to earth at our very feet, to adorn our caps presently, and to remind us, perhaps, on future occasions of their beautiful little proprietors.

The silence is so wonderful that we scarcely dare to breathe for fear of marring it. It hardly enters into one's mind to perpetrate the sacrilege of firing a shot—yet how very easy it would be to raise one's gun and help oneself to yonder impertinent little pair so coolly unmindful of the potential death that lurks within our gun-barrels. Let them live, by all manner of means! They are most excellent eating, but we do not want them; we shall make them a present of their pretty, innocent lives to do what they like with. They continue to preen and smooth and arrange, just as though there were no such thing as a loaded gun in the scheme of creation or invention! Soon they will take wing and dart away as suddenly as they arrived. I should like to dart after them, follow them about for an entire day, and find out what they do with their lives and how they spend their time. Are they perfectly happy here, one wonders, in their wild, free forest sanctuary? Are they ever dull and bored with life? I should say not. They have their living to get, and that is always an absorbing occupation. They know how to keep themselves well fed and nourished in the hardest of frosts just as well as in the soft days of bilberry and cranberry eating. But what do they do with their time during all the dull hours of the interminable northern winter? God knows! Perhaps every single pine tree is different in their eyes, and affords endless opportunity for research. Perhaps they find a constant and unfailing source of delight in the mere fact of being able to dart from place to place with the swiftness of the meteor (for the tree-partridge is one of the very swiftest fliers of all God's winged children, the forest people). Imagine the ease with which change of air and scene may be enjoyed by our little friends here! it is the work of a moment for them. They have

but to feel a desire to taste the atmosphere a few miles further south, or north, or wherever it be; over yonder moor, perhaps, and across the next belt of forest, and—presto! a few lightning-quick beats of the powerful wings and they are at their destination, and busy preening their feathers and smoothing themselves after their flight, just exactly as they are doing at this very moment over our heads!

All very delightful and interesting, no doubt, but the cold—upon which the smiles of the sun make no impression whatever—is too severe to allow of a very prolonged inspection of even so beautiful an object as a tree-partridge, so we go one way and our feathered acquaintances go the other with a rapidity of movement which proves that they distrust us, and have not realised and appreciated our generosity in making them a present of a new lease of life! Perhaps they could not fly slowly if they tried, they always seem to be at high pressure. But who comes here? Somebody in white, moving deliberately, unlike the two little spirits of the air whom we have just been watching, moving quite slowly over the ground in hops and jumps and short canters of a few yards at a time; he is as white as the surface of the snow itself; get behind a tree-trunk and watch. It is a hare, of course, a white hare, ruddy brown in the summer, but snow-coloured now. This is Nature's kindly arrangement for his safety, for the poor fellow has no power of himself to help himself, supposing one of his many enemies happens to meet him by the way, and therefore Nature dresses him up in a garment of white in order that he may lie in the snow in moments of danger and thus escape observation. He appears to have plenty of time upon his hands, anyway, and is in no sort of a hurry; here he comes, ambling along as though there were no object in life save to visit every little tuft of dry and yellow grass that sticks up here and there from out of the snow and sniff at it for a moment before proceeding to the next patch! When he has cantered up to this and smelt at it he ambles away again, in no particular direction—right or left of his original path, it's all the same to him, and presently he may be observed retracing his steps, bound, apparently, for the place he first came from! Suddenly a thought seems to strike him, and he returns to his original line and approaches us once more. It is not March yet, so it would scarcely be fair to say that the poor witless old fellow is mad; but February is well on, and so, we should say, is his insanity. In another fortnight he will be as mad as, well—as mad as any other March hare.

Watch him twist his whiskers about as he comes along, and see how his nose wriggles without ceasing! Probably he is very nervous of lurking dangers, and constantly on the look-out for surprises; for the forest is full of bitter enemies to his peace; their name is legion, though he has never harmed a soul, poor chap, and would not know how to set about it if he felt ever so vindictive. The worst of all his enemies, because the most numerous and the most cunning, is Reynard the fox, whom poor innocent pussy naturally considers the evil spirit, the ogre, the demon of the forest; for F-O-X spells death to him and the devil, in one. The number of murders for which Reynard is responsible every year is not to be computed; hare is his standing dish in these parts, and our friend here has doubtless had many a narrow escape. If only he could speak, and we could persuade him that we were benevolently disposed towards him, and could get him to sit here for a space and spin yarns for our edification, what exciting tales he could tell us of pursuits and surprises, and pitiless day-long trackings and eventual hair-breadth escapes from the very jaws of the enemy!

Here he comes; he is going to pass within a foot or two of our ambush, and yet he has not detected our presence. Poor innocent—he is not half 'up' in woodcraft! If he were a wolf, now, or a lynx, he would have known of us long since; some of the forest people are worthy of the name, but this poor old chap is only a fool. Give a soft whistle and you shall see what you will see. . . . Look at that! he has actually sat down; taken a seat in the cold snow in order to stare around and fidget his whiskers awhile and consider, with proper deliberation and without undue haste, what the curious newfangled sound should portend. A fox, or any forest person worth his salt, would have first disappeared and then thought the matter over; but this half-witted individual must needs stop and consider and run a great risk simply because the shock of hearing an unfamiliar sound has loosened his knee-joints and made a short halt necessary for the recovery of nerve—it is pitiful! His nose is working like the perpetual motion, but he has not scented us out, neither has he caught sight of us—his incapacity is really pathetic. Suddenly he decides that it was a false alarm; it's all right, he thinks, and he rises from his cold seat and resumes his objectless meandering. As his head happens to point south-east when he comes to this resolution he travels away in that direction; had he been looking north-west he would have gone north-west. I am sure

he has no fixed idea what part of the country he is making for, or why is he going there and not somewhere else! And so the poor empty-headed old fellow will go on, slippitty-slopping through life, following his nose whithersoever that restless feature may chance to lead him, and getting his meals when and where he can between the attacks of his enemies. God has given him four very serviceable legs, and when he can put these in motion he may laugh at the speed of either Reynard or anyone else; but the day will come when someone will make a pounce while he is sitting down to listen, and if his four good legs do not get to work quicker than his wits there will be an end of our poor friend, and the forest will be the poorer by a hare.

Talking of enemies, here comes old Mephisto himself! Look at him, grinning as he trots along, and looming red against the white of the snow. It is Reynard, following in poor old crazy Mr. Hare's tracks, and tracing every deviation made by that amiably eccentric individual, at a slow but steady trot. This will bring him close to our ambush, unless he first detects our presence here. He certainly looks very handsome, though extremely wicked withal. That grin of his is a most diabolic grin; it says as plain as words: 'I shall have this fool of a hare to-day, for he's getting as cracked as they make 'em, and he is close in front of me at this moment, and when I've got him I shall give him what-for, because he has led me many a dance for nothing. Ha, ha! Just a little extra nip and a bit of a worry—won't he yell!'

Now I am going to shoot this fox, for several reasons. The first is, that I shall not be hung for it in this country; indeed, no one will think the worse of me for the act, but rather the better. Then he is the evil genius of many worthy forest-people, besides silly old Mr. Hare. It is difficult to believe such things of any one, but I have it on the best authority that this miscreant is in the habit of murdering that heroic lady the Grey-Hen (wife of Lord Blackcock), as she sits upon the nest which is shortly to be filled with the little honourables, her sons and daughters; she will not fly in order to escape his fangs, but prefers to stand by her eggs until her flesh is actually pierced, and when self-preservation at length asserts itself—not as the first but as a subordinate law of Nature—and she tries to escape, it is too late. It is also true that this detestable ogre of the woods has fattened his red carcase upon the helpless, toothsome little ones of the willow-grouse, the wild duck, and even (though I scarcely dare to breathe the dreadful

words) upon the august little persons of the young capercaillie princelings! Surely all this is evidence enough for the death-warrant of such an arch-traitor and rogue! he shall die in his sins, and many lives shall be saved thereby during this coming springtime. Wait a minute, let him advance just a little nearer, and then we will speak to him in the voice of doom. Now then! up with our guns and let them execute sentence upon the culprit! But the culprit is an exceedingly wily culprit, and the glint of the sunlight upon the barrels has informed him in an instant of his danger. During that one instant he has turned, and is now a streak of fleeing fleeting red pigment dancing in and out among the pine trees—an escaping convict! Not so fast, ogre and demon, you are running away from your judges; you are convicted and sentenced; you have a debt to pay; and, listen, your doom is already sounding from the mouth of this trusty executioner of steel. There, he is dead, he will murder no more! the forest will be the richer this summer by many leveret-babes and grouse-children, and the murder of innumerable innocents is avenged! Moreover, the skin of the fox forms an uncommonly neat little carpet, and fits to a nicety beneath the pedals of a piano. We shall toss for it, you and I, and it shall remind us to all time of a hare saved from an untimely fate before the ides of March shall have arrived to smite him with delightful madness.

But now, since we have destroyed all chance of seeing any more of the forest people just about this spot—for we have annihilated the stillness and set the air reverberating with the grossness of the noise of our guns—let us be up and moving. One's blood seems to stagnate as one stands and watches; a little quick snow-shoe running will soon set it flowing again. There are few forms of exercise which will produce that effect in a shorter time, especially if you come across anything in the nature of a hill which requires surmounting. There are no hills here, however, and our sole embarrassment lies in the dodging of the pine trees. Snow-shoes have a way which is entirely their own in dealing with pine trees; it is *de rigueur* with them to go one on each side of the stem if they can possibly so arrange matters. This is manifestly exceedingly awkward for their rider, and his relations with the pine tree in question, whom he thus meets face to face in the middle, are strained and embarrassing to a degree.

What a maze of tracks of every shape and size! At this advanced period of the winter very little new snow falls, and therefore

the footmarks of the inhabitants multiply and accumulate daily. Here are some huge cavities, large deep holes, crowded together and penetrating apparently to the very bottom of the snow. If only this trail were fresh we might, with some reason, grow excited over it, and race home to the lodge for keepers and beaters—for this is the sign-manual of a family of elk—a large family too, five august personages have passed this way; but, alas! when? the track may be a week old or even more.

Only fancy if we had happened to be here at the right moment—that is just when these five lordly creatures had been predestined to pass this very spot and to plant their feet here and here, where these great holes are! Where are they now, these five great beings who passed by in their majesty a day or two days or a week ago? they are gone, perhaps fifty miles away, perhaps two hundred; perhaps, again, they were within earshot when we executed Master Reynard there, and threw up their great heads at the sound, and pounded and crashed away through the deep snow in the grand way that only an elk can! It is a sight to see once and to remember always.

Fox tracks abound—single line tracks these, very neat and unmistakable; so are the triangles of the cantering hares; and here is something that might be a big dog, but is more probably a wolf. If you look close you will see that several wolves have passed this way, each stepping—like a sensible creature—in the track of the leader in order to save itself trouble. This is the way of the wolves when they travel. The wolves are a wise people and know a thing or two!

There are no bear-tracks at this season, for the bears know better than to waste their energies in dragging their heavy bodies through the deep snow; they are asleep in their *berlogi*, or winter quarters. There may be one within hail of us for all we know to the contrary; indeed, we might easily stumble upon one of these snow-dens of theirs and crash through it and find ourselves in the august presence of old Mr. Bruin himself at any moment. Such things have happened. Should we or the bear be the more startled? I wonder. And which of us would be out and round the corner the quickest, we or he? Speaking for myself, I believe I should make very good time indeed under the circumstances, but then, so, undoubtedly, would the bear, unless she happened to be a lady bear with small cubs, in which case there would probably be a bear-hunt, with the present writer taking the rôle generally played by the bear.

Now we have come to the end of this belt of forest, and there opens before us a wide dazzling plain of snow. On the tops of the very outermost trees that fringe the dark mass of their fellows sit a number of big black birds that look like crows at the first glance. At the second you can see the bright red eyebrows and the dazzling neck plumage which declare the blackcock. If you have not happened to notice those points, however, the next proceedings of the birds would betray them to you who they are. At the first sight of us they have risen in a body and fled packed across the open. Suddenly every wing is folded and every neck bent earthwards; the entire company swoops—there is a cloud of snow floating away in the air, and they are gone. There is not a trace of them left! Now is our time, if we have sufficient woodcraft to understand this mystery. They have taken a header into the snow. We have them at our mercy! All we have to do is to creep up and shoot them down as they struggle one by one from their living grave and take wing. They pass the night tunnelled in this way beneath the snow, but if you happen to mark the place and walk about over their heads they will come out, and then, ye gods! what a time the gunner may have among them before he has done with them! Only take care that you do not get knocked over by one of them, for they rise here, there, and everywhere from the very bowels of the earth, and one may easily knock your hat off as he forces his way out of prison, or startle the heart out of your body by appearing suddenly, like a black ghost from nowhere, between your very show-shoes!

As we hasten over the moor towards the spot where we have marked down this large blackcock family—forty or fifty of them, we compute it—we see a very pretty sight. A company of little white spectres rises almost at our feet and flits away into the very heart of the forest—willow-grouse, eight or ten of them. How difficult it is to watch their flight over the white snow, for Mother Nature has dressed these bantlings, as she has dressed the hares, in raiment of snow colour for their protection. Now and again the eye of the sun falls upon them as they fly, and a flash of light is sent back to us as we gaze. Suddenly they disappear; probably they have settled.

We stand and watch the blackcocks struggle scared from their snow graves and scatter their shrouds as they dart away. Perhaps we shoot a brace or so. It is like shooting at a haystack, for they rise at any distance, from a yard to ten yards, and take some time getting free. If we wanted them, we could shoot a couple of dozen.

Then away we glide once more. The February day is a very short one in these latitudes and we do not care to be out any longer than the sun. We have eaten our sandwiches and emptied our flasks; we have seen a number of the forest people, and done a good turn to many others by ridding them of an arch-enemy. The short day has been well spent; let us return through the forest and see the last of it. Crashing through the treetops goes a kingly bird, laughing to scorn such obstacles as twigs and smaller branches—they cannot stay his flight! It is a capercailzie, king of game birds, lord of the forest. Bare your head before his majesty ere he disappears into the secret places of his beautiful kingdom. There—he is gone! We can still hear the crashing of his great wings among the trees in the distance, but we shall never see him again, for it is fierce scorn for him to be seen of men, and in his displeasure he will fly far away!

Let us turn homewards—we have seen enough. We will snow-shoe as quickly as we can towards the place where dinner is to be had and the creature comforts to which we are slaves; and as we skim along we can drink in the superb air and congratulate ourselves in that we have lived to see one of the most beautiful of God's creations—a pine forest under the spell and glamour of the February sun.

FRED. WHISHAW.

A Simple Annal.

OLD Jonathan Scart was meting out various parcels of groceries to a group of customers on a Tuesday in July—Tuesday being the day on which Jonathan weekly received his stores from Brackminster.

It was growing dark in the stifling little shop, though dusk had scarcely set in out-of-doors, and a guttering tallow candle on the counter barely revealed the gnarled and twisted old face of the shopman as it bent over the half-pound of currants which he was packing for Bella Duke with great, knob-knuckled, broad-thumbed, trembling hands.

So that, in a short passage between the house door and the entrance into Jonathan's den, just behind the cluster of women in the shop and blocking the shop door, the figure of a tall and handsome girl leaning against the wall was unnoticed.

'Aye, she be a peert un, I tell 'ee'—it was old Bella's shrill voice—'an' he med think hisself lucky, that a med. Why, to say nowt o' the farm and the stock, they du say she've eight hunner pund in Grannel's Bank! I know them parts wot she comes from, and I mind her grandfer well. Ah, and a close fist he wor! wuss even nor Jonathan here, which be sayin' a precious deal!'

There was a laugh at the sudden sally, and some of the women nudged one another delightedly; for these rapid flank movements were characteristic of Bella's conversational strategy. As a victim said, 'Yer don't know when she may fly at yer, and she a talkin' o' summat else.'

As for Jonathan, he only wagged his shaggy old head. He knew the futility of attempting to parry the lightning thrust of a rapier with a heavy spade, instruments which are fairly emblematic of the relative talents for debate of Bella and himself.

But Mrs. Coskin, the laundress, a goggle-eyed woman in a drab sun-bonnet, was bursting with curiosity. She had been tied to the washtub since dawn of Monday by a special demand for all

the Manor House linen, and had been very short of gossip. And her help, Janet Stubb, was slightly deaf, and a poor creature to boot, who never knew what was going on.

'You's a talkin' o' t' young widder up at Crotch's farm. But who, for goodness, did yer say wor her young man?'

'Who?' echoed Bella Duke with the contempt of full-fledged wisdom for callow ignorance, 'Why, who but young Silas Croft? T' old Silas is sot on it, and, as for the lad, he be nothing loth, and why should he?'

The girl in the passage cowered as though she had been struck and were awaiting a second blow.

It came from old Jonathan, all unwitting of the pain he was giving.

'Now yer mention it, I mind ez how Silas Croft told me but an hour agone his lad was tekking her in the new gig to see some kin o' hern t'other side o' Brackminster, an' he won't be back till to-morrow dennertime. Mebbe they'll choose the ring on the way.'

Amid the breathless silence produced by this bit of genuine and significant news, a gentle voice with tears in it (it was that of Phœbe Stibbs, the charwoman) said, 'Ah, but 'tis pity o' Patience Furnall!'

The words fell upon the ear of the owner of the name, where she crouched in the dark, as the death-knell of all her earthly happiness, and she blindly staggered to her feet, and forth into the night.

The cool rush of the evening breeze upon her acted as a bracing tonic to her bodily faintness, and she struck across the heath with rapid steps, her hands tightly clasped upon her heart as though to stifle her grief till she was beyond all human ken of it. And that dumb instinct of profound pain which yearns for solitude, rather than any set purpose, led her to the most unfrequented spot in the whole of Forton Heath. It was a deep depression—probably a disused chalk hole—a cup lined with velvet sward, in the very heart of the heath.

Here she flung herself prostrate, burying her face in the dewy grass and moaning out her pain on the bosom of the great mother. Thus had she been wont, from childhood (for she was an orphan), to unburden herself of her troubles.

In the phrase of the country-side, young Silas Croft and she had always been 'named together.' As Silas junior was quite the brightest and best-looking of all the young fellows of the parish, so was Patience the bonniest and sweetest of all the girls.

Only a fortnight ago had he whispered in her ear the 'old, old story' which keeps the earth young.

True, he had told her of difficulties in their path.

Silas senior was as hard and about as old-fashioned as a flint axe, and, being a wealthy man for his class of life, would oppose his son's union with a penniless girl.

'But don't ye be afeard, Patience, my lass!' (the night wind crooned the words gently again into her ears). 'We'll win through yet, you and me; and father, being as how he've neither wife nor daughter, will tek kindly to 'ee yet, my bonnie bird.'

And now all was over! This fickle lover had been caught by the handsome face and well-lined purse of the siren of Crotch's farm!

And, in the touching words of Holy Writ, 'What good shall my life do me?' was the cry of Patience Furnall's sore heart.

Her moaning had by this time worn itself out. The soft mantle of the summer night wrapped her and her sorrow in its embrace. Gradually she began to listen to the various sounds which her quick, country-bred ear could recognise, even at a long distance, in the deep stillness, for the breeze had died away.

The quick alarm sounded by a cock pheasant to warn his hens of a fox prowling round; the distant bark of a dog, which she knew to be Bingo, at the Crofts' farm (and she thought with a bitter pang that never more would his friendly muzzle touch her hand); the hum of a belated cockchafer; the thud of a rabbit's fore-foot stamping a signal; the tinkle of the brook (now but a thread of water), which bounded the heath on its southern side—all these were familiar to her. And presently there boomed upon the stagnant air the striking of the Brackminster clock, miles away. She counted the strokes, as the bell rolled each with deliberate unction off his iron tongue, and was aghast at reaching eleven. But she bethought her that her old uncle was, as he told her, 'agoin' to roost' ere she started for her groceries, and she was settling down in her old attitude when a sound—strange at such an hour and amid such surroundings—caught her attention. It was unmistakably the rasping of a file on metal, and it seemed to come from among the gorse bushes to the left, which there grew to some height.

She had arisen to her feet, and was keenly listening, when suddenly the filing ceased and a gruff voice uttered—was it possible?—the very name which had been riding, like a stormy petrel, on the turmoil of her thoughts—'Silas Croft!' Or was it

that her fancy had wrought the utterance into that name—that still loved name—as a chance sound is intelligibly absorbed into a dream?

With a vague sense of some intangible danger threatening him who was after all so dear to her, she took her courage in both hands and crept noiselessly through the tortuous sheep tracks amid the gorse—all of which she could have threaded blindfold—till she got within easy earshot of the speaker, and then waited, quiet as a hare on its form, in the shadow of the gorse.

Yet, prepared as she was, her heart thumped wildly when the same voice, terribly near to her, said:

‘Av’ yer got the pison ’andy for the dorg?’

‘Teach yer grannie,’ was the reply, and again the file went to work as though sharpening a tool.

After what appeared to Patience an endless interval, the gruff voice again broke silence.

‘Twor a rare bit o’ luck to hev spotted the young un a goin’ hoff for a houtin’ with his sweetheart,’ (Patience writhed behind the bushes), ‘and to hev got hout o’ that bloke of a hostler as they weren’t a comin’ back to-night.’

‘Wot hif t’ old man, Silas, shows fight?’

‘Look ’ee ’ere, pard,’ growled the gruff voice, with a fierce oath, ‘I beant’ agoin’ to stick at nothin’ this ’ere night—nothin’, I tell yer. And if so be as ye don’t care to risk the rope ’long o’ me, jest yer say so an’ cut yer stick right away! But, Lord love ’ee,’ he continued in a milder tone, ‘’twill be as easy to gag him as to give a bottle to a babby. And I’ve heerd ez how t’ old man keeps a stockin’ somewheers ’andy. And he be a warm un, you bet.’

‘But ’tis ower early, mate, surely.’

‘Aye! let’s wait, say, till ’bout twal o’clock. Then we’ll do the job clean.’

Patience thought this enough. The imminent danger of old Silas had utterly blotted from her mind all memory of wrong received from him or his. Her one absorbing thought now was to put him on his guard. Gathering her skirts tightly around her, she turned to go. But in the act she trod on a dry twig.

‘Wot’s that?’ challenged the gruff voice.

Instantly she squatted down in a nook of the bushes, and thanked God she had a dark dress on.

She heard a footfall, and, with sick fear clutching at her heart, she espied, through the twigs of a bramble, a short, thickset man

standing at the farther mouth of the sheep track and peering down it in her direction. Just then she with difficulty suppressed a cry, for some three yards beyond her something scuttled out of the gorse on her side across the track. It was the saving of her, by God's mercy, as Patience ever after thought, for the man, with a satisfied grunt, went back to his mate, and she heard his report:

'Twor nowt but a rabbut.'

This time she picked her way with redoubled care, and, once she reached the open, she sped onward, like a lapwing, till she reached old Silas's door. Bingo was always loose at night to guard the yard. The old dog came up to her with great demonstrations of affection. He, at least, was faithful. But the house itself was all in darkness. She knew that neither men nor women servants slept there. The only woman old Silas could endure about the place was Phœbe Stibbs, who did the charing and cooked for him and his son. The farm men slept at their own cottages.

She threw gravel at the old man's bedroom window, till at length a night-capped head was poked out.

'What the plague——'

'Hush, Master Croft! 'Tis I, Patience Furnall, and there be them coming as would rob and murder you. Call Bingo in and load yer gun. I'll go and get help.'

'Not if I knows it! Why, there's ne'er a body within arf a mile! Come ye in, lass, out o' danger! Bide a wee bit till I get my togs on, an' I'll open to 'ee.'

She could hear him strike a light and huddle on his clothes, and ere long he had unbarred the door, pulled her and the dog in, and turned the key and shot the bolts back.

He was a man of action was old Silas.

Then he sat down to load his gun and pistols, and nodded encouragingly to Patience. But a thought struck him, and, going to a corner cupboard, he produced a glass of excellent port wine, which he made her drink off, like a dose of medicine.

'Now tell me all about it, lassie.'

He listened without comment of any sort, and when she had done said:

'Twas partly cos o' Silas bein' away. If he'd a bin here them varmints would ne'er ha' ventured to call. Howsumdever——'

And a dangerous glint came into the old man's eyes.

'Now, mark me, gell! Ye're 'andy with a gun, for I've seen ye with wun awatchin' yer uncle's cherries, and a firin' hof it

hoff too! Now tek ye the gun, and, hif them fellers breaks the door in, fire at un, same has hif they wor blackbirds, which '—and the old man chuckled grimly—'in coorse they be. For me, I sha'n't fire till they be pretty close, and then I means to.'

He glanced at the clock.

'Tis nigh time they wor here.'

And with the word came a sound of stealthy steps shuffling about the door, and a voice (not the gruff voice) whined:

'Please, good sir, for the love o' Gawd, hopen to a poor man wot's badly hurted.'

No answer. Old Silas signed to Patience to rest the barrel of the gun on the back of a chair and to kneel behind it, with her finger on the trigger, ready.

There was a whispering, and the tool on which the file had been used soon forced the lock, but the bolts held till a furious charge burst the door open. Patience shut her eyes and pulled the trigger, and the foremost man fell headlong into the house and lay senseless; while the other turned tail and fled into the night.

Old Silas was at the door with a leap and discharged his pistol after him, and Bingo, relieved of his master's grip on his collar, darted in pursuit.

Then Silas turned to examine the prostrate man, saying, in his grimly humorous fashion:

'Pon my credit, but 'twas true wot he said 'bout a poor man wot's badly hurted.'

But Patience, after the tension of nerves to which she had been so long subjected, burst into a passion of hysterical tears.

'Hoot toot, my lassie, doan't ye be frit! 'Tis not a mortal hurt, an' he'll live to be hanged yet.'

So saying, he brought his rude surgery to bear on the robber's shoulder where the shot had taken effect, and being a shrewd old man made Patience help him by holding the light and other little services, in the doing of which the girl gradually regained composure, as he meant she should.

'And now, my bonnie, can ye do 'nother bit job for me, or are ye wore out, poor maid?'

And he laid his hand caressingly on the brown hair.

'I'll do wot I can, Master Croft, an' willin'.'

'Well, 'tis nowt save to come 'long o' me to thine uncle's and then to get thee to bed. Then I'll go rouse the neighbours and get this chap seen to. But first——'

And he stooped down and tied the man's legs tightly together.

He gave the girl his arm and supported her trembling steps with infinite tenderness. At her uncle's door he grasped her hand, and his voice shook with emotion:

'Ye'll never want a friend, little maid, while old Silas Croft lives, for ye've saved my life this night. As for young Silas, he'll likely have summat to say to ye on his own hook.'

These words were very sweet to poor Patience; but so utterly weary was she, that they sounded to her numb brain as little more than a pleasant melody. And no sooner was her head on her pillow than she sank into the dreamless sleep of exhaustion.

She awoke next morning, when the sun was climbing towards noon, to find herself famous. But being anxious to be alone with her tangled thoughts, she stole out to help in her uncle's cherry picking. It was sweet to be up there amid the green leaves and glossy fruit, the ladder gently swaying under the south wind's lullaby. She espied, herself unseen, the ample form of Bella Duke bearing down upon her uncle's cottage like a Dutch flat beating to harbour, and felt a very natural pleasure in depriving that lady of the gossip she evidently promised herself. Her *vis-à-vis* on the other ladder, old Simon Watt, presently croaked out:

'Look 'ee, Patience, I be agoin' to my denner. And, hif so be as ony o' them limbs o' Willis boys comes a foolin' round my ladder jest you tell 'em I'll leather 'em foine—aye, foine a wull, that a wull.'

And the old man-servant crept slowly down the ladder, growling as he went.

So Patience was left alone to grapple with the problem, 'What could old Silas have meant by those closing words of his the night before?'

And a tiny flame of hope began to glow within her, despite her determination not to fan it.

Now it so happened that there actually did come to the ladder foot a youth, who crept so noiselessly up that his bright grey eyes were looking into Patience's brown ones ere that dreamy young person knew what was happening.

'Silas!'

And the sweet face grew scarlet as the cherries.

'Ay, my sweet, Silas it be; an' we'll put up the banns next Sunday, my plucky lass!'

And the strong brown hands closed upon hers.

'But, Silas, what of yon widder at Crotch's?'

And on the wings of Silas's hearty laugh, even before he spoke, her sorrow vanished into air.

'Lord love 'ee, darling, why she've bin promised to Dick Tarcott, the vet., ever since last Whitsun. An' she be goin' to be a prime friend o' yourn. To-day she was for comin' to coax father into it, bein' as how she be his best friend's only child. That's wot I've bin after 'long o' she. But father, bless 'ee, he doan't want no coaxin', 'e doan't. Bend this way, honey. Mind the big branch!'

And across the heads of their respective ladders their lips met in a long and clinging kiss.

R. PARDEPP.

Our First Home Coverts.

OF all the home-coverts, the most disappointing—least holding of any quarry large enough or important enough for our blowpipes or catapults—was, without doubt, the kitchen garden. Though the blackbirds made very merry with the strawberries in the right season, the garden was fenced by banks with meagre growth upon them, far inferior, as covert, to those big mounds of earth, surmounted by a perfect thicket of bramble and hedge growth, which are the common fences of Devonshire—a waste of much good land in the farmer's view, but a joy to the wild things of the earth, such as birds and boys. If only the garden had been walled it would have been more tolerable, for did we not well know the pear tree, trained against the wall of a neighbour's garden, on whose branches a flycatcher yearly built its nest and laid its eggs, not unlike those of robins, but with bigger splotches of red russet? Moreover, where the wall had grown old and crumbly, were there not holes and crannies most suitable for the nesting of the blue tits, though most exasperating for the boy who would break into their house, by reason of the solidity of the masonry whose jagged edges sorely rent little fingers? Our garden afforded none of these opportunities. It was a weariness of trim gravelled paths between fruit trees trimly trained, *espalier* fashion. A scared thrush or blackbird would fly, once and for all, beyond its confines, and we never saw him again until the next campaign. The orchard, which it took comparatively a long journey to reach, was a much happier hunting ground.

Other motives, besides the measureless laziness of boyhood, disinclined us to visit the orchard except for an excursion of some length. It was necessary, in order to arrive at it, to pass round the house front, and this in itself was an enterprise not without its positive dangers. For it was always possible that one might be seen from the windows and summoned in on some trivial pre-

text or other, such as to know whether one had learned one's lessons, or to be told that it was tea-time, or that one's face was dirty. This was a fear that was ever present. But besides this danger, which may be called a positive one, there was always the likelihood that one would be observed, even if not summoned—observed by some one of those who were so utterly unsympathetic with the real interests of boys' life as to suppose, on the ground of a foolish nursery legend, that Jenny Wren was Cock Robin's wife. Even in later life one is conscious of the cold blight which falls upon the atmosphere in presence of spectators whose attitude is one of chill uncomprehending criticism accented by a spice of ridicule. In boyhood, before the skin is tough, the moral pain is greatly worse; and the risk of incurring this observation made us shy of passing before the windows. There was yet another motive. The little gravelled path which bent round the croquet ground, between shrubs of laurel and laurustinus, to the orchard, led close in front of four or five beehives, ranged side by side beneath a sloping roof of boards. It was a good place for bees, sunny, and sheltered from the north and east by a wing of the house and by the outbuilding in which the croquet things were kept. The shrubs in front may have bothered the insects a little on a windy day, when they came back with stomachs laden with honey or with thighs red and yellow with pollen; but they were low shrubs, scarcely higher than the level of the footboards of the hives. The stream of perpetually busy insects, so opposite in all their instincts, except in the love of honey, to us boys, made us shrink past with quick, stealthy steps, and crouch low to let the stream go over us. We were conscious of a certain antipathy between ourselves and bees, an antipathy which probably had a real existence. On our side there was no doubt about it, for did not the bees sting? And there is reason enough to suppose that it was mutual, for bees hate dirt; and what boy is not dirty? And bees hate those who are afraid of them; and there was no doubt of our fear. Late in the year we might find a fearful amusement in watching the bees despatching their drones, dragging forth the big, defenceless, lazy things and stinging them to death, or pushing them, still living, over the foot boards, while the poison worked through their blood. Or, again, we might find a yet keener interest in watching some bold, marauding wasp visiting now this now that hive-entrance to see if he could find one unguarded. This interest was the keener because it gave fine scope to our imagination in picturing the passage of this striped brigand through the crowded

alleys of the hive when once he had made his entry. We wondered ever to see him come out alive, as often happened, for in those days we did not know that the sentries at the hive door are alone responsible for its safety, and that if an intruder once pushes his way unchallenged past them he may go about among the citizens who are engaged on the works of peace and be unregarded. This absolute concentration on their business was foreign to our ways of thought and outside our philosophy.

When once the hives were passed we were free of all our dangers. No windows commanded the orchard; and first we would draw that thicket of the orchard hedge of which a flock of sparrows often made a temporary resting-place. Sparrows were not always there, but we seldom failed to find a blue tit, who occupied it as at once a place well stored with insects and a good outlook whence he could easily reach the kitchen yard on the sounds of any pig-wash pails being set out there from the scullery. Him we would chase, with a couple of catapult shots, from the covert of the thicket up into the first of a straggling row of fir trees which shielded the north wind from the orchard. Thence he would fly, on further persecution, beyond the immediate bounds of pursuit, or would so artfully conceal himself in the sombre green foliage that our necks would ache with throwing back our heads to look for him. We would try, further down, in the west hedge of the orchard. The birds, occasional chaffinches, or whatever they might be, once scared from the orchard trees, would seldom remain among the fruit trees, for, further down, at the southern edge of the orchard, high elms grew from the hedge bank, and in their branches the birds could sit and watch in safety till we had departed. But all the western hedge was fine covert—a tangle of bramble and hedge-growth—with a dank ditch prolific in ferns and tall grasses (as often happens with these Devonshire banks) on its near side. And in a laurel bush, between the ditch and the path which led down beside the fruit trees, there seldom failed to be a thrush's nest in the spring time—a nest from which Joe, the coachman's boy, who knew how all birds were to be fed by hand, often took the young ones, keeping them in a wicker cage in the wood-house. We had been two years under his tuition in all these mysteries before he deemed us sufficiently initiated to attempt with our own hands the bringing up of any of those songsters. With jackdaws it was another matter. We were permitted to thrust the oatmeal down the gaping throats of these clamourers on a single note a whole year before a young thrush could be trusted to us.

But it was a joy to creep up to the thick laurel bush—what it was doing there, out in the orchard, no one knew—and to see the quick, anxious eye of the mother bird peering over the brown bill which rested on the dry grass crown of the mud wall of her nest. We knew the exact position from which to get the best glimpse of her without disturbing her—knew all the windows into that cool, shady house of shining laurel leaves. Further along the path a ‘wood-argus’ butterfly would invariably at that season be flitting and settling on ground mottled, like itself, with flecks of shade and sunshine. An ineffectual dash with the cap was enough for him, and we crept stealthily on, with eyes quick-glancing everywhere, on the lookout for nobler game. From the tall grasses, just where the big elm trees begin, a tiny brown bird would perhaps fly up into the hedge. ‘A warbler’ or ‘chiff chaff’ or ‘willow wren’ we would style it indifferently, for our boyish ornithology took insufficient note of the slight differences which distinguish these migrants; and forthwith would begin the search among the yellow grass stems for the frailly poised nest which we might hope to find—dome-shaped, if the structure of the willow wren; a simple cup, if the work of one of the less finished architects.

On the eastward side of the orchard, dividing it from the lawn before the house, grew a straggling row of tall firs. In one or other of these a wood-pigeon often nested, laying its untidy lattice-work of sticks across a fork of the red branches, and deeming this meagre foundation of a nest to be home enough for the two fluffy balls which she hatched out of her white eggs. The shelter was sometimes insufficient. Twice we found hemispheres of white shell on the ground beneath the tree after a night of violent storm; but experience seemed to teach the wood-pigeon no better. She would shift to another tree and repeat her domestic experiments on similarly slender foundation. While the hen bird was on her nest her husband’s favourite place was in the high elm tree just across the orchard. There he would sit and coo songs of love to her, monotonous enough, as these songs are apt to be, whenever he could spare time from the task of searching for daily bread for her and for himself. Occasionally we would creep beneath the tree in which the mother bird was brooding on her nest, and fire vain pellets at her from our catapults. But the attitude for perpendicular catapult firing is one of little comfort, the crowded branches and needles of the pine intercepted our missiles; we had a consciousness that even a straight shot would

be ineffective to pierce the lattice of the nest, and finally, though we were boys, and Plato's most savage of wild beasts, we had, after all, a certain shame in assaulting the poor mother engaged on her most sacred duties. So, urged by a complexity of motives such as determines many of our actions in later life, we soon abandoned our vexation of her rest and stole off after other quarry. The dignity of the husband's duty, as watchman in the high elm trees, gave him no claim on our slender mercies; but he again was safely enough out of our reach—it was seldom that we could even catch a glimpse of him through the close lace-work of the leaves. The elm trees, in truth, were but little use to us as a covert. If a bird nested in them, as many a chaffinch might, building a tiny marvel of compact beauty and neatness, it was scarcely discoverable, all lichen-covered as it would be, against the similar lichen of the branches. To search for it in that great maze of boughs and leaves was like the search for a needle in a hay-stack.

We knew a tree, though, where a chaffinch had twice built—an apple tree close beside the elm trees. Exceedingly well we knew that tree, for, earliest of any tree in the orchard, it would be covered with ruddy-cheeked fruit—quarendons—juicy, crisp, and sweet. We knew just where each tree in the orchard grew, the taste of its apples, the seasons at which we should find them ripening. All which knowledge did not prevent us in the least from eating many an unripe one and suffering the penalty. The chaffinch's nest was placed far away out on an extended arm of the tree; for this orchard was a beautiful place, unkempt, the trees unpruned, because the gardener said that they were old trees, not worth troubling about. So out on this extended arm we would creep, with vivid fears lest it should snap off beneath our weight and let us fall with it to the ground. But we were no aldermanic weights in those days, and, though the tough arm bent itself bow-wise and groaned aloud, it still held on. There we could see the purplish spotted eggs in the bed of softest down and horsehair interwoven. We did not discover this nest until the eggs were laid in it, so the birds did not desert, but all the while we were creeping out upon the bending arm the parents would flutter around us with perturbing chirps of agonised anxiety. We seldom, however, took all the eggs of any nest. We were boys of more conscience than some.

The most satisfactory disarrangement of any bird's domestic life in which we succeeded had for its victims that pair of wood-pigeons. They had built—such building as they did—in a fir tree close beside the croquet lawn. It was not their favourite

tree, but this year that had been occupied by a pair of magpies. It was a tree hard of climbing. There were no out-jutting branches which the hand could seize or the foot rest on for ever so far up. We all assailed it, one after another, by 'swarming,' but after we had gone up, hand over hand, a yard or two, the clutch of our young arms and legs would weary—besides, the slippery scaly red bark came off like shillet, which fails one's foothold—and down we would come with a run, to the great detriment of trousers and waistcoat. Joe could mount a yard or two beyond our limit, but even that height was yards below the lowest branch. One day he imparted to us a great secret. His friend, the blacksmith's assistant in the neighbouring village, had promised to make him a pair of climbing irons. We did not know what these things were, and in the many days of waiting for the fulfilment of the promise of the blacksmith's assistant, Joe's numerous descriptions of them did not go far to enlighten us. We understood that without any trouble you could run up the tallest and most branchless trunk 'like billy-ho' with them (the simile was Joe's), but of their nature we remained in some ignorance. One evening, however, Joe informed us they had come. He showed them to us in the mysterious gloom of the wood-house. It was too late to try them then, but he explained how to put them on, tying the longest straight part of the iron to his ankle, with the shorter part passed from outside inwards under the instep of his boot. This shorter part terminated in a downward-pointed, vicious-looking spear; and the idea of the contrivance was to dig the spear, by a kick of the foot, into the stem of the tree, whereby the foot would find a firm rest on the iron which passed under the instep, and so, aided by the grip of the arms, you might have a basis from which to establish a similar basis higher up with the other foot. In this manner you could go up 'like billy-ho'; but we had settled that, since these methods entailed some severe stabbing of the tree-trunk, it would be wiser to say nothing to the authorities on the subject of the climbing irons, which spent their night in the obscurity of the wood-house. The following morning we circumnavigated the front of the house with caution and success, and Joe, fastening on the climbing irons, commenced the ascent of the tree. It must be confessed that we watched his progress with some disappointment. We had gathered that the person of whom he spoke as 'billy-ho' was a much more rapid tree-climber than appeared to be the case. However, in course of time he arrived. Once he had grasped the lowest branch, all the rest of the climbing was like walking up a ladder.

'Two eggs,' he announced presently from his elevation. We had lain down face upwards on the grass as the easiest way of watching him. 'Pretty well sat on, too,' he added; and we knew, though we could not see him, that he was holding one up critically to let the light shine through. Long ago he had taught us this simple bit of bird-nesting craft.

'Take one,' was suggested from below, 'and leave the other.'

'What's the good?' he said. 'You've got wood-pigeons' eggs, haven't you?' He referred to our egg collection. 'I know a better thing than that.'

We did not presume to argue with him, of course, and in due time he arrived, rather resinous, at the foot of the tree.

'I tell you what I'm going to do,' he said. 'I'm going to wait till the young 'uns are hatched. Then, when they're pretty well fledged, I'm going to tie them by the leg to the nest. The old ones 'll go on feeding them, and then, when they're pretty well grown, I'll take and kill and eat them. I've promised Charlie one' (Charlie was the blacksmith's assistant) 'for making the climbing irons.'

'Then there won't be any for us?' we said rather blandly.

'You—oh, you!' replied Joe with that tincture of scorn which was one of the main reasons of our hero-worship of him. 'I'll let you use the climbing irons.'

The permission was sufficiently gratifying to console us for any disappointment about the wood-pigeon's nest. Joe carried out most of his programme very successfully. The little squabs were tied in; the parents, much surprised, no doubt, and troubled, continued, nevertheless, to feed them: we had settled a day for their execution; on the previous evening we had seen them fat and well; in the morning they were gone! Joe, at first, was not without his suspicions of us, but he soon found that they were groundless. Our view leant rather to some supernatural intervention. In the village, a few days later, Joe learnt that the blacksmith's assistant had had squabs for dinner, and though, when questions were asked, he indicated a tree on quite another property as the one from which he had obtained his pigeons, we felt great reason for concluding that he had considered the value of his climbing irons to be inadequately represented by one pigeon, and had preferred to climb the tree for himself after sundown and take two.

'It only shows,' as Joe sapiently observed, 'that one ought never to tell anything.'

HORACE HUTCHINSON.

*Flotsam.*¹

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN.

CHAPTER XIII.

TO ARMS!

IT is perhaps some small consolation to the survivors to know that those dear to them, and lost perhaps by a death too painful to recall, died not in vain. There are some who would fain wipe the year 1857 out of the British calendar. A year truly of woe and distress and unspeakable horror; a year standing out prominently in great red letters, so long as the world shall remember the English race. But we who now look back, standing as it were farther down the avenue of time, to those days receding fast into the perspective of history, can scarcely fail to recognise that the Indian Mutiny is a corner-stone of our race.

Years such as eighteen hundred and fifty-seven must ever be remembered; such years are the leaven of the ages. A race of human beings is a chain hung down into the centuries. The weather beats upon it, the changes of the seasons try it and chafe and rust it. Prosperity and misfortune alike sap at its strength. It is not only the rain but the sunshine also that deteriorates. Our English chain has hung through fair and foul, and at times a great strain has been put upon it, testing it, proving that its links are not worn yet.

Forty years ago such a strain tugged at us, and we held good. Surely it was well to have been a link of the chain at that time. Surely those men and women, aye, and the children, died to some purpose!

What of Neill and Hodson, of Ewart, of Cooper, who leapt alone through a breach into a stronghold where we killed two

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thousand; of Adrian Hope, the giant with the gentle smile and the terrible sword; of Nicholson, of Peel, of Inglis, of the clerk Kavanagh, who between sunset and dawn handed his name down to history; of Taylor, of Gubbins, the dauntless civilians; of Neville Chamberlain; of the thousand and one soldiers and civilians who sprang up, like mushrooms in a meadow, wheresoever the need came? What of these? They were Englishmen, and 1857 told us that we had them. Assuredly we may reflect with pride that 1857 was added to our history, that these men were the contemporaries of our fathers, that the women who suffered and were strong, that the men who fought, were the fathers and mothers of some of us.

The news awaiting Harry and Marqueray in the billiard-room of the Field Club was that of the outbreak at Meerut—the cloud, large only as a man's hand, which had risen in the north, and was to spread over all India.

To Harry and to such as he—and they were many in the Anglo-Indian army in those days—the news had but little meaning. For the ignorance of the majority of subalterns was as great as subsequently their courage proved to be.

Harry stood upright by the billiard table with flashing eyes, with his strong fingers handling the hilt of his virgin sword, and he was not the only man in that room who welcomed this news as the promise of a campaign and promotion.

The gravity of their seniors was scarcely heeded by these young fellows, who were perhaps a little tired of the regular and uneventful life of barrack-yard and mess-room.

'If there is to be any fighting,' said Harry to Marqueray, with his bold spirit blazing in his eyes, 'by gad, I'll have a fling at it.'

'Yes,' answered Marqueray, with his gentle smile, 'I've no doubt you will.'

'And you are just the sort of Englishman we want just now,' he reflected, though he did not say it. And his eyes rested with something like affection on the dare-devil, reckless face. Frederic Marqueray knew somewhat of Asiatic warfare, and that in such a fight as he perhaps foresaw even then, the only course for Englishmen was to dare—and dare—and dare again.

Looking back now to the great Mutiny in the cool repose of historical reflection, we arrive at the same conclusion. It was those who dared who saved India.

Through the thirty days that followed, days marked by the

semi-ridiculous Calcutta panic, by the windy storm of many counsels, by fear and pusillanimity on one hand, and a steadfast courage on the other, days drawn out by suspense and foreboding, darkened by news that filtered in from the North, harassed by the silence that dwelt in the North-West—through all these the Colonel kept his men in hand.

‘They are faithful, but they are not to be trusted,’ he said grimly, in answer to all questions; ‘no man with a dark face is to be trusted in these times.’

‘And not all who have white faces,’ added Marqueray the cynic.

Then at last Colonel Sir Thomas Leaguer received permission to dare that bold stroke which he had long meditated. He paraded his regiment, and bade the men pile their arms. He sat grimly on his horse in front of them all, and gave the order. Marqueray, at the head of his company, repeated it. There was a silence, a momentary hesitation, and the life of every European officer hung on a thread. The pouches were full of ball-cartridge, the rifles were ready.

Frederic Marqueray’s company was the first to obey the order, in a dazed silence beneath the unflinching eye of their captain. The others followed suit, and the men were dismissed to their quarters, while the baggage-waggon, under the charge of a company of European fusiliers, carried away the rifles.

Across the parade ground the Colonel and Marqueray exchanged a glance.

‘You’ve ruined the regiment,’ said one of the Majors, with a queer break in his voice. He was one of those who believed in the integrity of the sepoy, and it was only by the decree of fortune that he was saved from paying with his life for his belief.

‘No,’ answered the Colonel quietly, ‘I’ve saved it. They would not have held out another day.’

The officers, grave-faced and silent, walked slowly towards their quarters. Some of them, the younger subalterns, had queer white patches on their cheeks. Some of the elders wiped their faces with their handkerchiefs, as if they had just run a race.

‘And what the devil are we to do now?’ Harry asked Marqueray in a low voice, as they strode along side by side.

‘Volunteer for active service,’ replied the older soldier promptly. ‘If it’s fighting you want you will get your fill

before we have done with this business. The mutineers have Delhi: they will have fifty thousand men in there before we know where we are. We built the fortifications, we trained the men, we have over a hundred big guns there, and the largest stock of ammunition in Upper India. They knew what they were after when they went to Delhi. We shall have to take Delhi, Harry.'

He paused with a queer grim smile, which no doubt was lost upon the eager young soldier, who never dreamt of else than immediate glory for British arms.

'Yes, and we'll give them a d——d good hiding into the bargain,' cried Harry, with his easy laugh. 'What is this about the King of Oudh and two thousand men concealed in Garden Reach?'

'Oh, that is nothing,' replied Marqueray; 'Calcutta knows what we are made of. There will be no trouble down here, because the natives know that we have more at our backs. Up country it is different. They think there that we have no troops left at home, that we show them all we have.'

Harry laughed again.

'How are we to set about getting some work to do?' he asked, as he strode along with a fine martial swing.

'I advise you to go to the Colonel and tell him.'

'Ah! But he hates me,' exclaimed Harry, 'and so does she. They think I'm wild and a hopeless sort of devil altogether, only fit to play cards and do steward at a dance.'

'I think you're wrong there,' answered Marqueray. 'They like you well enough. Besides, the Colonel is not the man to withhold a chance from any young chap who wants to fight. Take my advice, and go now. Tell him you're ready to go off at once and anywhere.'

'And what about you, you queer old devil? I thought we should do this campaign together.'

'I've got my own work, Harry,' replied Marqueray quietly. 'Perhaps we'll meet later.'

Harry shrugged his shoulders, and his face dropped. For he was full of goodwill towards his fellow-men, and liked their company. This grave-faced soldier had been his steadiest friend ever since he had set foot in India, though indeed he had plenty of others—gay fellows, jolly fellows, who sang a good song, played a good game, and borrowed money with a fine good fellowship. None of these things Marqueray did, but he tendered instead a

half cynical, careless advice—he warned him against the jolly fellows with a fearlessness of consequence and a contempt of personal responsibility, which left some impression behind. In Calcutta, in the gay days of gymkhana and garrison dance, the other fellows were perhaps the best company, but as soon as there was question of war, of the trade which after all was theirs, Harry turned quite naturally to Marqueray, only to meet the disappointment of a grave statement that the elder soldier had other work to do.

‘I’ll see the Colonel this evening,’ said Harry thoughtfully, after a pause.

‘No, see him now.’

‘But I have several things I want to do.’

‘Such as——?’

‘Well,’ answered Harry, with a slight flush, which we may be sure was not lost upon his companion. ‘Well, I want to go down the river, and say good-bye to the Lamonds, you know!’

‘Yes, I know. I’ll do it for you while you write home. I suppose you will be writing——’

Then Harry turned on him with a flash of anger.

‘And—d——n it! what about your *own* letters home?’

‘Oh,’ replied Marqueray, imperturbably, ‘that is all right, thanks. I have no one to write to.’

The officers in those days had no quarters in barracks, nor indeed was there an organised mess-dinner. The two friends had now reached Marqueray’s bungalow, a quiet little house abutting the native lines.

‘I will go down and explain to the Lamonds,’ he said. ‘If you take my advice you will go to the Colonel at once. It is the man who speaks first who gets the pick in these times.’

Maria was lying in a long chair in the verandah facing the river, somnolently recovering from the fatigues of the afternoon heat. Moreover, she was effecting her ladylike purpose with all grace and a pretty languor eminently befitting her well-developed beauty of form and limb. Her dark hair was just loosely enough bound to betray its length and luxuriance—her soft white dress was none the less cunning because its folds were easy. She gave a little yawn over the book she held in her hand, but checked it only half enjoyed, for the sound of wheels set her suddenly alert. She half sat up, and listened with a little smile. Then she threw herself back again, and stretching one arm above her head closed her eyes.

Frederic Marqueray was shown out into the verandah by a native servant, who retired with racial discretion when he had held aside the scented curtain of woven grass that hung across the window.

For some moments Maria lay quite still, and Marqueray with a dark smile waited for her to open her eyes. This she presently did with a little cry of surprise and confusion—with white fingers raised to the loosened tresses—with a slipper dropping from an agitated toe.

It was all very pretty and maidenly and natural, but Marqueray, grimly attentive, saw the shade of disappointment in her eyes when they lighted on his worn face instead of the boyish countenance upon which she expected to read the effect of her sweet confusion.

'Ah!' she said, 'I have been asleep.'

'And most becomingly you compassed it,' he answered. 'Pardon me, Miss Lamond, for surprising you. It was, however, a little the fault of your servant. I should not have presumed to come straight through if I had known. Your slipper is beneath the chair; may I—there?'

He handed her the slipper with a grave bow, and drew forward a chair.

'I am the bearer of a message from Harry,' he explained, laying aside his gloves. 'But first—where is your father?'

'Oh, father went away last night—suddenly.'

'Ah,' said Marqueray, looking vaguely across the river. 'Where did he go to?'

'I don't know,' replied Maria, half indifferently. She was beginning to feel sleepy again.

'Ah,' said Marqueray again, with a queer look in his eyes, which Harry had described a hundred times as a native look. 'Then you do not know that it is rather unsafe for you to be living alone here with native servants. There is a rising among the men of all the high caste regiments. The mutiny is becoming serious. If I may suggest it, it would be wiser for you to come into Calcutta and stay with friends until your father returns.'

Maria was all attention now, but betrayed no sign of fear. She was, indeed, admirably calm, and not forgetful of her hair. Marqueray told her as much as he knew or as much as he pretended to know, and she learnt his news with due intelligence and some exclamations of anxiety.

'And so,' he finished, 'I have an excuse for my apparent rude-

ness in not calling since the ball—we have, as you know, been kept in barracks. Harry has, as a matter of fact, commissioned me to tender his apologies—and perhaps make his adieux.’

‘And,’ said Maria, glancing at him quietly, ‘where is he going?’

‘He has volunteered for active service. And it may be that he will leave Calcutta to-night. He is now writing to his people at home.’

Marqueray had risen—had taken her hand to say farewell, and as he said the last words with his grave, old-fashioned bow he looked straight into her eyes.

‘Indeed,’ she answered, with a sudden soft glance from those fine orbs, which it was hard to meet with equanimity.

He turned away, and reached the window before her voice arrested him. .

‘Captain Marqueray!’

‘Yes—Miss Lamond.’

He came slowly back, and stood looking down at her.

For a moment she looked into his eyes.

‘Will you tell me,’ she said with a mystic smile, ‘whether it is all women you hate—or only me?’

‘I will tell you when we have taken Delhi,’ he answered.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN SERVICE.

HARRY was hurried away to Delhi, where he took service under General Barnard, and we may be sure raised his voice, together with those of such young fire-eaters as Hodson and Wilberforce Greathed, who were all for daring and a noble recklessness. The former was already known for his great ride from Kurnaul to Umballah, a daring palladin born centuries too late, as brave a man as ever drew a sword—Hodson, of Hodson’s Horse, one of the great stained names of our warlike race—Wilberforce Greathed, a man of different metal, an engineer, all brain to conceive, all heart to dare, who drew up a plan of attack wherein science was handmaiden to daring. Among such men as these Harry Wylam found kindred spirits, for there was the making of a great soldier in this happy-hearted subaltern.

All the sternness of war was here suddenly brought before his eyes, and no doubt hardened his heart. He had the good fortune to see Daly ride into the British camp at the head of his Corps of Guides—brown-faced warriors, clad in dusky woollen shirts, with fierce eyes half-shaded by huge dusty turbans—European and Asiatic faces alike tanned by the sun of an early summer. These men had set out at half-a-day's notice, had marched twenty-seven miles a day for twenty-one days, cavalry and infantry alike: an achievement which holds its place in the history of the great Mutiny as almost unique.

Harry, too, had his company in the columns that moved out from the Ridge in the pearly dawn of the morning of June 12 towards the white walls of Delhi, in accordance with the wild scheme of assault forced upon the vacillating General by Greathed and his colleagues. Wild indeed was this plan to blow up two of the great gates of the city, and boldly assault the besieged with two meagre columns of fighting men, but not too wild to have succeeded, perhaps, had it been attempted. But the General changed his mind, and the men were called back—some of them, Harry afterwards said, with tears of vexation in their eyes.

Thus a great opportunity was lost—and this with the history of Sebastopol yet fresh in men's minds—to seize the city by a quick and daring attack. Instead the troops were withcalled, and began once more the weary work of besieging a fortified city with too few men to invest it, and too few heavy guns to batter in its walls.

In the meantime events at Calcutta had been busy with the names of great men. Some in high places had proved themselves unfit to meet the responsibilities attaching to their office, while obscure individuals were beginning to emerge from the rank and file of office holders to set their mark upon the history of India.

The whole city was in a ferment by now, for it was already apparent that the English statesman at the head of Indian affairs lacked some of the qualities necessary in a Governor-General in this great strait. That Lord Canning did well in the storm that raged around him we all know, that a better man might have done better it were folly to ignore. In a multitude of counsellors he failed to assert that authority which is of the mind and not of titles, that divine and heaven-sent spirit of command that made plain John Nicholson, of the Punjaub, quiet Vincent Eyre, of the Royal Artillery, rise like stars in a firmament of

mediocrity. That Lord Canning had the courage of his own opinions all Englishmen are ready to admit. He was a brave man—just, conscientious, and merciful. But he lacked the fire of genius. He was without that spark of self-confidence which raises men above the slough of many counsels, and strengthens one hand to hold the helm of a stricken country with daring and a set purpose till the storm be overpast. In the history of the world it has always been written that in moving times a country naturally turns to a fighting leader. At this time all India, all Anglo-Indians, felt that military law was imperative, that the helm should be held by the gauntleted hand. But red-tape reigned supreme, and the anomaly of a civilian organising a great war resulted in Cawnpore and a hundred catastrophes that would have been averted had martial law been declared, and had the aid of civilians tendered with soldier-like promptitude been accepted at once.

The persons with whom we have to deal were thus suddenly dispersed from the capital to work out their destinies with that sequence which to the observant cannot but indicate a pre-ordained scheme.

The Colonel was at Allahabad, where he had found work to do, for in such times no sword needed to be idle nor any scabbard rust, while many mere clerks, both white and coloured, laid aside their pens and handled the heavier steel.

Maria Lamond was staying with friends in Calcutta, where in fact she had taken refuge the day after Marqueray's warning. A letter from her father, bearing no address, doubtless brought about her decision to act upon the advice of a man who, though he obviously disliked her, was moved by a sincere enough sense of chivalry to urge him to seek the good of unprotected youth and beauty. Her father was still absent, as Maria was ready enough to inform inquirers. He had so many irons in the fire that he never remained long at home, and it seemed natural enough that in these troubled days the fire was too hot here and too cold there to suit the astute Mr. Lamond's calculations. The man of many irons usually bears the marks of many burns. Sooner or later he takes hold of something at the wrong end.

'No,' Maria would reply, 'I do not know where he is, and I am of course very anxious about him, although I think that he is quite capable of taking care of himself.'

In which filial sentiment this fond daughter was no doubt correct. She only spoke the truth when she professed a com-

plete ignorance of her father's whereabouts. There were others who felt anxiety on his account, and wondered where the restless and ubiquitous Phillip Lamond might be in these stirring times.

Good-hearted Lady Leaguer had sought out the girl soon after the panic with a fine charity, overlooking any little characteristics of which she happened to disapprove. In time of war it is only right that the women who cannot take part in its action (though it is to be supposed that the coming generation will appear upon the battle-field in knickerbockers)—it is only right that they should bury small social differences, and seek to comfort or encourage each other. This Lady Leaguer did, sowing broadcast in the hearts of her more timid sisters a cheerful courage worthy of a great soldier's wife.

Frederic Marqueray had been seen in Calcutta. He had been spoken with in Allahabad. Benares had known him, and men in the neighbourhood of Dinapore had exchanged a nod with him. Whatever Marqueray's business happened to be at this time he went about it with that quiet self-concentration which paralyses curiosity, and sets a seal upon inquisitiveness. He was never in a hurry, and yet seemed as ubiquitous as the restless spirit, Lamond himself.

He was to be found indeed at this time in Calcutta again, leisurely and innocent as to demeanour, lying at full length on a chair in the smoking-room of his club. He was alone in the room, and hardly seemed to notice the entrance of a second member, a native gentleman in riding-breeches and a small turban. This man was somewhat remarkable in the day of which we write, because he had received an English education, and had learnt to combine East and West in one keen clear brain in a manner then little known. He had evidently just returned from playing polo, of which game he was one of the finest exponents of his day. His small thin features relaxed into a sudden smile when his eyes rested on Marqueray's smooth black hair, just visible over the back of his lounge.

'I have heard strange things about you, Marqueray,' he said, coming forward and laying his riding whip on the table.

'Ah, Saranj, then don't believe them.'

Marqueray slowly uncurled his long slim legs, and rose. His movements had that Oriental leisureliness and dignity which it is said comes from the wearing of flowing robes. He shook hands,

'No, mon prince,' he said, with his gentle smile. 'Do not believe them.'

It happened that his interlocutor was a prince in his own country. At least, the title which his forefathers had borne had no other equivalent in English. The pride, however, of a race that ran back to the days of the New Testament prevented this scion from taking the trouble to explain his grade to every young subaltern fresh from England and a baronial hall bought by his grandfather; and only a few Europeans, who happened to know the language and the history of Saranj's country, ever gave him his rightful title.

'I have heard of a wonderful report drawn up by a clever officer of a disbanded native regiment.'

'Ah!'

'Yes,' continued the native gentleman, with a smile almost of affection. 'A report which could only have been made by one of seven Englishmen in all the country, of six or seven who know this country, and our people, and our habits, and our language, and our thoughts so well that they might just as well be one of ourselves.'

Marqueray bowed in his abrupt way.

'I have not properly described this paper,' continued the native gentleman, with his well-bred quiet. 'It is not a report, for it says nothing. It is merely two columns of names, the names of men like myself who own large estates, who are mere sahibs, and who might nevertheless influence a cause by money or men. The names, I understand, are divided into two columns, those under one heading are to be implicitly trusted at this crisis, the others—well, the others are not.'

Marqueray was leaning against the table watching the secretive face, searching the steady bead-like eyes. He neither admitted nor denied.

'I am told that I head the list on the right side,' went on the man called Saranj. He had so many names that the shortest was usually chosen.

Marqueray still admitted and denied nothing.

'I have learnt,' went on the other, 'to keep my eye on the quiet men, the men who never talk of themselves or their own achievements, who walk gently through life in the shadow of the wall of silence. No one knows who has drawn up this report.'

'And no one ever will know,' declared Marqueray.

'Precisely,' said the other. 'But whoever he is'—he paused,

looking steadily at the Englishman, 'he has one good friend. There is nothing so pleasing to a loyal man as the evidence that he is trusted.'

Marqueray turned round slowly and sat down again. In those days one could not even think of one's manners.

'You are not above a friendly hint,' said Saranj, examining the handle of his riding-whip, which he had taken up with the apparent intention of going.

'No.'

'Then let there be a second report, consisting of European names.'

And he walked quietly out of the room.

For some time Marqueray remained at length in the long cane chair, as if buried in thought. And when he at last arose his face was set and hard, as if his reflections had been the reverse of pleasant or satisfactory.

His horse was awaiting him in the shadow of the trees. He mounted and rode to the bungalow occupied by Lady Leaguer.

That lady was at home, and came into the room where he awaited her, with the smile which this young soldier never failed to receive.

'I am glad to see you,' she said, looking at him keenly. There is a certain maternal scrutiny in the eyes of some women which is not to be deceived by any paltry assumption of cheerfulness or freedom from care.

'Thank you,' he answered. 'My sword has never left its scabbard.'

She gave a little laugh.

'I had a letter from the Colonel yesterday,' she said, 'and in it he wrote—let me see—where is it?'

For she carried the letter in her pocket, and presently she read aloud from the flimsy, close-written sheet:

'If Fred Marqueray is not at the front it is because he is reserved for work infinitely more dangerous and requiring greater courage, steadier nerve, and a vaster knowledge than are possessed by nine out of ten of our younger officers.'

She looked at him, smiled, and shook her head.

'When did you arrive in Calcutta?' she asked.

'Yesterday.'

'And when do you leave?'

'In half-an-hour.'

'For where?'

'For Allahabad first. That is why I came, and also to say good-bye. If you care to write a letter I will wait for it.'

Lady Leaguer was already at her writing-table, and for some minutes the scratching sound of her quill pen alone broke the silence.

'The mutineers in Delhi and elsewhere,' said Marqueray at length, 'are receiving information of our movements. I am going to try and find out from what source they get it.'

'Which means that you already know,' said Lady Leaguer, sealing the letter which she handed to him. 'You are a clever man, Fred. Good-bye, and don't get killed.'

CHAPTER XV.

TREASON.

THE fighting on the Ridge was not of the description to satisfy Harry, who would fain have taken part in some more glorious campaign, such as was accredited to Vincent Eyre on his march to Delhi. For Harry was no patient soldier to lie in camp before a walled city and work out its downfall by stubborn siege.

There was indeed plenty of excitement provided for the little army under General Barnard by an active foe, but it was all of the defensive order. And we may be sure that Harry grumbled sorely at the lack of enterprise displayed by his chief. The truth was, that our men were absurdly outnumbered, and that during the month of June it was as much as they could compass to hold their own. Repeatedly the enemy came out and boldly attacked the British camp, only to be beaten back and pursued to the very gates of the city. This was pretty fighting in its way, but it led to nothing, and the army before Delhi was conscious of the fact that the world was waiting for it to accomplish impossibilities. Such small triumphs as the capture of the Metcalfe house—the holding of Hindoo Rao's house against repeated assault, and finally the taking of the Sammy House, were not sufficient for Harry's hot impetuosity.

It was on the evening of June 23, when Harry, having played his part in the saving of Hindoo Rao's house, was sitting wiping the dust and sweat from his face, that he was surprised by an apparition.

He had hitherto been fortunate enough to escape wounds, although his impetuosity in action had called forth comment more than once from older soldiers who had learnt to guard their own skins. To-day, however, a bayonet-scratch in the wrist had given him considerable pain, and seemed likely to contract the tendons of his left hand. Knowing that medical aid for such a slight wound was out of the question, he was endeavouring to wipe the grime and dust from the torn flesh, when a quiet and pleasant laugh made him look up.

It was Phillip Lamond coming towards him with the air of *débonnaire* leisureliness which did not leave him even in the midst of such a scene as this. He was dressed in clean white clothes, and wore a civilian's sun-helmet. His face was somewhat drawn and thin, but the pleasant smile was upon it.

'Well, Harry,' he said, 'I hope you are not hurt.'

There were many civilians in the camp, and no one noticed Lamond much. He had a pleasant way with him of appearing perfectly at home, wherever he happened to be.

Harry leapt to his feet, and shook the slim hand held out to him with many assurances of delight.

'Well, I'm d——d,' he cried, becoming at length coherent and quite forgetting his wound, 'who would have expected to see you here. How is Maria?'

'Oh, Maria is all right, thank you. At least she was when I left her, except for her anxiety about you.'

And Phillip Lamond gave a little laugh.

'Was she anxious about me?' asked Harry eagerly, and his grimy hand went to his moustache.

'Well,' answered Lamond, with his friendly laugh. 'Naturally.'

'And how the devil did you get here?' asked Harry, slapping his friend on the shoulder. 'And why the devil are you here? And—well, tell me all about yourself.'

Lamond slipped his hand within Harry's arm with a fatherly familiarity, and they walked away from the scene of the conflict together.

'There is not much to tell,' answered Lamond, with gay frankness. 'An old chap spends most of his time looking after his liver. But it was not that that brought me here. It was your affairs, my boy. I came up to see if I could make anything out of your Oudh estate—of what is left of it, at any rate.'

'That is not much, I'll be bound,' exclaimed Harry, with a

reckless laugh. 'Where are we? It's confoundedly dark all of a sudden.'

The short twilight had indeed suddenly given place to night. They were stumbling along the Ridge—all broken by the passage of heavy guns and the recently begun earthworks of the engineers.

'This way,' answered Lamond, guiding his companion skilfully.

'You seem to know your way about here, pretty well,' said Harry. 'So you came up to look after my affairs. Well, it's devilish good of you. But I'm afraid it is no go, old fellow. My affairs have gone to the deuce.'

'There is a bit of the estate left,' said Mr. Lamond, reflectively, 'which we can re-arrange when all this trouble is over. It is not much, but it is all you have to marry Miss Gresham on.'

He gave one of his easy laughs, but did not look at his companion, who was silent. The arm upon which Lamond's thin fingers rested affectionately stiffened a little.

'When will this trouble be over?' asked Harry, after a pause. 'Not yet a bit, I hope.'

'So do I.'

'Why do you hope that, you who are no soldier?' asked Harry, looking over the intervening valley towards the glimmering lights of Delhi.

'Well, I should like you to get a chance before the mutineers are beaten; and I should like a chance myself.'

'What sort of a chance? Queer beggar you are, Lamond.'

'The chance every poor devil wants—of making a little money.'

'Ah—yes,' cried Harry, with his light laugh. 'But how?'

Lamond shrugged his facile shoulders.

'Goodness knows, something may turn up,' he replied. 'At all events the niggers will have to pay someone for all this.'

With which sentiment Harry agreed readily enough. For at this time it was the fashion among the men, and even with certain of the officers, to nourish a cruel and unjust hatred against any man with a black face. The native servants and the camp-followers, without whom, indeed, the campaign could never have been prosecuted, went in daily fear of maltreatment at the hands of the masters whom they served faithfully enough.

'When Delhi falls,' said Lamond presently, 'there may be a chance of picking something up. Beggars cannot be choosers of their methods. I shall stay here, and don't you seek to get

transferred elsewhere, my boy. You stick to Delhi—stick to Delhi, Harry, to the end.'

'The end seems a deuced long way off,' grumbled the young soldier.

'Not so far as we think perhaps,' replied Lamond, airily. 'I came up here with a pretty strong detachment of reinforcements. The siege-train is coming along steadily. Neville Chamberlain will be here to-morrow or the next day. When they get the big guns on to those gates they will soon batter them in. Brind will see to that—he knows his business. And when the city is taken by assault there will be some confusion—and there is plenty of treasure and money inside those walls.'

He turned and waved his slim hand towards the city, standing grey and ghostlike on a hill-top.

'And where the carcase is, there also shall the vultures be gathered together,' laughed Harry, who remembered the solemn daily prayer and Scripture-reading in St. Helen's Place.

But Phillip Lamond failed to perceive the pertinency of the reference. He was gazing uneasily across the hollow towards the walls and minarets of Delhi, now faintly lighted by a waning moon. Beneath them on the broken ground lay many corpses. These were all the slain of the enemy, for the English had brought in their dead, and in the silence between the booming of the heavy guns the picks of the burying party could be heard. The killed lay strewn upon the brown earth, some of them little clad, and others swathed in their dusky whites.

'Looks like washing-day,' said Harry, as he noted the direction of his companion's gaze. But Lamond was absorbed in his own thoughts.

'Do you want to get your V.C.?' he asked suddenly.

'Of course I do.'

'Then I'll put you in the way of it! Sooner or later Delhi will be taken. When the siege guns come up the assault will be decided upon. I am going to stay here. I want to go into the city with the troops. When the time comes you must manage that I be by your side. I know Delhi as I know my own pocket. I know some back ways and by-ways. I'll lead you, my boy, into something good—not only a V.C., but a fortune.'

Harry's eyes glistened. He did not love money for itself, but he loved to spend it. He was open-handed and generous enough. The pinch of poverty was so new to him that it had not yet lost its savour of insult. There was something degrading in the

thought that he—Harry Wylam, an officer and a gentleman—should have to think before he put his hand into his pocket.

Some of his friends also had earned their Victoria Cross—it seemed by a chance that never came his way. Some little act of spontaneous daring, some quick seizure of a passing opportunity had gained for others the coveted decoration; and Harry's breast was yet innocent of a medal, though all men knew that the heart beating there was brave enough.

What wonder then that the young soldier never paused to inquire of his father's friend whether the means of gaining such glory and wealth were guaranteed to be legitimate.

'I'm your man,' he cried, with the fervour of battle still running through his blood. 'We ought to have been in there a month ago; and when we do get in, by gad! we'll make 'em pay for it.'

'Yes,' echoed Lamond, 'we'll make them pay for it. You had better go into hospital and get that wound washed. You cannot afford to neglect so much as a scratch in this climate. I'm going back to Rao's house.'

He nodded in his careless way, and stood on the brink of the incline, watching Harry's tall form disappear in the gloom towards the cantonments, where lights flickered dimly and grey shadows moved hither and thither in all the stir of camp life after a battle.

When Harry had left him Phillip Lamond did not go back towards Hindoo Rao's house, the scene of the day's conflict. Instead, he sat down where he was—a shadowy form in the dark—on the deep red soil. He sat for some minutes as motionless as the stones around him. Then he moved a few yards farther down the slope. Below him, huddled up in a hundred fantastic distortions, lay the dead—each white-clad corpse looking, as Harry had said, like a heap of clothes thrown carelessly on a drying-ground.

A little farther, and Phillip Lamond was within touch of a dead sepoy. The reek of blood was in the still air—the nameless scent of death.

Lamond crept forward, and with his foot touched the nearest body. The man was quite dead, and as he rolled over displayed a grim, grey-bearded face. The Englishman crept forward and dragged off the turban. With infinite caution he waited, looking quickly round. He was alone with the dead, who lay on every side of him. He could hear the shouts and cries, the beating of drums and the boom of gongs, within the city walls, where a com-

plete disorder reigned. Behind him the steady sound of heavy hammering betrayed the whereabouts of an advanced battery, where the gunners were repairing a broken carriage.

Phillip Lamond was snake-like and noiseless in his movements. He was a different man to that Phillip Lamond known in club and on course at Calcutta. The leisureliness had vanished, and was indeed replaced by a remarkable keenness of glance, a rapid movement of limb.

In a few moments the Brahmin soldier was divested of all save his loin-cloth, and Lamond rapidly threw aside some portions of his own clothing. With feverish haste he rubbed arms, legs, face, neck, and hands, with a dull red powder which he carried in his pocket in a small wooden box, which he subsequently concealed within the folds of his turban.

He donned the flowing robes of the dead sepoy, and Phillip Lamond of Calcutta was no more. In place of him a sepoy, in the robes of his caste, cautiously raised his head and looked around.

The waning moon had set, and the darkness was further accentuated by a thin mist creeping up from the valley of the Jumna. There was nothing to fear from the rifles of the British sentinels posted on the summit of the Ridge. The sepoy raised himself on his knees, and presently, with great caution, to his feet.

One of the bodies behind him moved a little. Some of these men were not dead yet, but slowly dying, and occasionally one of them groaned. Had Lamond taken the precaution of counting the number of the slain in his immediate vicinity when he first arrived, he would have discovered at this time that they had been increased by one.

He stood upright for a moment, listening to the uproar within the city, to the cries of the artillerymen on the walls—men of our own teaching who stood by their guns day and night, and died by them with invincible courage.

The disguise was perfect. Here was a sepoy of Delhi, speaking three or four native tongues with perfect ease.

He moved slowly away down the slope towards the besieged city, and as he did so one of the white-clad forms left for dead upon the battle-field rose up and followed him.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE RIDGE.

WHILE Harry and his companions were bewailing the inactivity of their lot, the grim Messenger came for their General, and called him away from his half-finished labours. It was decreed that after many battles fought the veteran Barnard should die in his bed, although the voice of the cannon sped his gentle soul upon its way. Every man in the British camp felt that he had lost a friend and a considerate kindly leader, when the news circulated among the tents. During his lifetime the younger soldiers had abused him freely enough for his inactivity, and lack of that wild recklessness which characterised the action of so many Englishmen at this time. But when he was dead they only remembered his kindliness, his gentle heart, his self-forgetfulness. And let us remember who look back through the perspective of history upon one who perhaps accomplished little when others were doing much, that he was asked to perform impossibilities, and in no wise forget that this brave old soldier refused to abandon the siege of Delhi when that course was suggested to him.

From time to time Harry had word or sight of Phillip Lamond's presence in the camp, where indeed other civilians had business or duty. But the young soldier's duties were naturally somewhat absorbing, and after a long day under a glaring sun he was too tired to set out and seek his friend among the tents. Also it may be confessed at once that Harry Wylam was apt to content himself very well with the company in which he happened to be—to forget, in fact, absent faces and influences no longer nigh. This may be mentioned thus a second time, as serving to show upon what characteristics that solid citizen Mr. Gresham based his judgment of his ward. For Mr. Gresham—and others who have less experience may well learn of him—was of opinion that the man who is under the influence of the last speaker lacks that stability of character without which it is hard to steer a straight course through life.

At General Barnard's funeral Harry caught sight of Lamond following the military procession with a melancholy mien. It is possible that the enterprising civilian had good reason to mourn the loss of so easy-going and easily-persuaded a com-

mander-in-chief. The authorities had in fact of late experienced some difficulty in restraining the enterprise of those civilians and unattached officers who were in the English cantonment under a somewhat vague appointment. As the Intelligence Department had more than once profited by the results of individual daring in the shape of accurate information and an extended knowledge of the enemy's movements, discipline was perhaps slightly relaxed in favour of the primary law that every man has a right to risk his own life in a good cause.

Ever seeking that fame and glory to be won at the cannon's mouth, a hundred young fellows vied with each other in daring, some of them penetrating so far as the ditch surrounding the city on the northern side. Others crept up at night within musket-shot of the walls in the hope of discovering some weak spot to be indicated subsequently to the artillerymen for bombardment. Thus private ambition and the public weal worked together so harmoniously that it was, as it always has been, hard to separate one from the other in judging of the results obtained.

It is to be feared that motives less commendable also stirred men's hearts to action at this time; for grim war is apt to strip human nature of the fine apparel of self-restraint in which we deck ourselves for social purposes. Greed of gain and a bitter thirst for revenge took hold of hearts at other times charitable and forgiving enough. And many like Harry and Lamond confessed their feelings aloud, and were unashamed.

It was immediately after General Barnard's death, during the first days of the brief command of his successor—a man in broken health—that Harry obtained permission to venture on a small enterprise which he had been meditating for some time. The idea had originally been Phillip Lamond's, and that civilian had drawn out the necessary plans.

To the south of the city, within rifle range of the Delhi Gate, and situated on the smaller road leading through Old Delhi towards Kootubminar, a group of houses and a mosque afforded shelter to the enemy's sharpshooters, who were in the habit of assembling there before making their repeated and harassing attacks on the British right and rear. These suburban positions were so strongly protected by the enemy's heavy guns that they could neither have been taken nor held by the British troops, while to batter them slowly to the ground was a task beyond the power of the besieging artillery, hampered as the gunners were by scarcity of ammunition and the heavy fire from the walls.

Harry's scheme was to blow up these buildings. Phillip Lamond's object was to get into the mosque. The advantage to be gained was great, while the risk of life was comparatively small. Harry happened to propose his plan at the right moment, and received permission to make the attempt.

It was just before dawn one dark morning in the first weeks of July that Harry crept out of the cantonments with his few picked men at his heels. Despite the extreme caution that was necessary he laughed aloud at the accidents attending their scramble down the slope of the Ridge. He was more like a boy leading some school escapade than a man moving towards danger with his life in his hand. Indeed, Harry Wylam had since the beginning of the great siege displayed so undaunted a bearing, so reckless and cheerful a courage, that he was already a marked man among those whose business it was to select fitting officers for a dangerous mission.

The night had been a dark one, cloudy and sullen. For the rains were at hand, and all nature seemed to be waiting in breathless suspense for the relief of cool showers and cloudy skies.

The enemy's guns were silent for a few hours. The great white city was asleep. At the foot of the slope a vague form rose from the ground and gave a cautious whistle. It was Phillip Lamond, who had been afoot all night prowling like some restless jackal among the buildings, where lurked a hundred renegades and outcasts ready to sell their nearest friends for a small consideration. Indeed, they would have put a low enough price on their own souls had there been bidders for such damaged wares.

In a whisper Harry halted his men, bidding them set carefully on the ground the bags of powder they carried. Then he moved forward alone to consult with Lamond, who awaited him, motionless.

'There are about twenty of them sleeping in the ground-floor rooms of the large house, there may be more upstairs, I cannot find out,' whispered Lamond, quickly. He was quite calm and collected, in striking contrast to the eager and impatient Harry, who was all alight as it were with the fire of battle before the first shot was fired.

'Twenty,' whispered he, joyously feeling the hilt of his sword. 'And there are seven of us. Yes, we can manage twenty—but what are the twenty doing there?'

'They are guarding the mosque. I am certain that my information is correct. For some reason the money has been

secreted in the mosque in preference to taking it into Delhi. They are sepoy from Cawnpore under a subahdar, whom I have seen before somewhere. If it was merely an outpost they would not have a subahdar in command. You must lead your men into the house. The pandies will make no stand. They hate a bayonet in the dark. I will break open the sidedoor of the mosque where you must join me, alone, while your men are laying the powder and the train.'

'Yes,' answered Harry, somewhat doubtfully. 'But we must not forget that the chief object is to blow up the buildings!'

'I am not forgetting it. But we are not such fools as to blow up a lot of bullion that is only waiting there to be taken,' answered Mr. Lamond, in that fine spirit of commercial enterprise and common sense upon which Englishmen may pride themselves.

'No,' said Harry, who was thinking more of the fight than of the gold, 'of course not. But whose money is it?'

'It will be ours in half-an-hour,' replied Lamond, with a little laugh at his own readiness of repartee.

Harry, as we know, was in sore need of cash, and more thoughtful men than he—better men perhaps—deemed it at this time no great disgrace to punish any with a coloured face by taking his money first and his life afterwards.

'All is fair,' said Lamond, with a double-sounding laugh, 'in love and war.'

As he spoke he buttoned his jacket across his narrow chest, and tightened up the belt which he wore over it to carry the sword which he, like many other civilians, had assumed. For everyone at this time was a fighting man, and no one knew at what moment he might be called upon to draw and defend his own life. But even these warlike preparations were made by Phillip Lamond with that gentle deprecation of manner which had earned for him a very useful reputation for harmlessness and insignificance. Harry, on the contrary, was full of a hearty British bluster as he struck his sword into the ground and left it quivering there, while he tightened his belt and pulled his khaki tunic down into closer folds across his muscular chest.

He loosened his tunic at the throat, and crammed his forage cap down over his eyes.

'We're going to have a devil of a lark,' he whispered eagerly, 'and a devil of a fight too.'

He prepared himself for this amusement with that glee of anticipation which makes English soldiers what they are. More-

over, it was not mere swagger or the bluster of youth and ignorance. For Harry Wylam had fought in fifteen battles since he had joined the army of Delhi, while the skirmishes in which he had taken part, neither he nor any other had cared to count. It had only been noted vaguely to his credit that, where the fighting was, Harry Wylam would be found, and there comporting himself with the courage of an English gentleman and the daring of a Highlander.

Lamond peered through the darkness at him with a queer tolerant smile. There was something in Harry's spirit that Lamond accounted to him for foolishness.

'Mind,' he said warningly, 'that you do not run any unnecessary risks. Show the men the way in, and then let them go. There is nothing so dangerous as fighting hand to hand in a dark room. Let the men go in first.

'No—damn it,' answered Harry. 'I'm not that sort of man. The devils volunteered to follow me, and follow me they shall.'

He turned as he spoke, and called up his men by a cautious whistle. Two of them were Goorkhas—one a guide in his dusky shirt and turban—the rest were Englishmen in trousers and shirt-sleeves, as they had learnt and been allowed to turn out to parade or action.

'Remember,' he said to them, 'no firing allowed. They mustn't know inside the walls that anything is going on, until the whole place is blown to hell. Use the bayonet and your kookri. There are twenty men inside the guard-house—but we are not afraid of them, eh? Bayonet them, and then lay six bags inside the house. Keep four bags for the mosque. Stick close to me, and do not light your fuse until you have my word. No—better still—no one is to light a fuse but myself, and if I'm killed—Parsons here will do it. He's a sapper, and knows the work. Now, are you ready? Follow me and stick by me—I'm not asking you to go anywhere I will not go myself.'

'We know that, sir; d——n yer eyes,' said a gruff voice, and someone laughed, which sound of merriment was apparently quashed by a dig in the ribs. The schoolboy element was not confined to the leader of this expedition.

They made their way slowly along the valley, avoiding all buildings of which there were fewer without the walls than there are to-day. It was yet somewhat early to attempt the enterprise, for the eastern sky was still black. As they crept onward, Lamond watched continuously for some sign of the dawn over the trees on

the Ridge. He glanced at his watch impatiently, and seemed to know the exact moment when the sun should rise. Truly, this restless spirit seemed of late to have been moving as much by night as by day.

'A chap followed me for some way,' he whispered to Harry, looking over his shoulder as he spoke; 'some badmash on the prowl, I expect. There are plenty of them about down here waiting to strip the dead.'

'Close up, you fellows,' said Harry to his men—and the little party crept forward.

They could now distinguish the outline of the buildings in front of them—a low square house and the rounded dome of the mosque behind it. The eastern sky seemed to be a little lighter. The air had that cool feeling which precedes the dawn of a new day—something clean and pure, which sweeps across the face. It was the hour when those who have watched all night at last give way to sleep—the moment when the night and its perils seem to rise up and go away.

'Halt!' whispered Harry, with uplifted sword.

Lamond had laid his hand nervously on his arm.

'There he is,' whispered the elder man. 'Do you see him, stealing away like a shadow? I have seen him before with his great turban and his green scarf—he dogs me.'

And, in truth, something moved away into the darkness in front of them—something shadowy and vague.

(To be continued.)

At the Sign of the Ship.

'FINISHING a book,' said the wife of a man of letters, a lady of much experience, 'is worse than' another event of the highest domestic interest. To be finishing a book, in the midst of packing up the effects of a household, and returning borrowed volumes and manuscripts to public and private libraries, and to be obliged, at the same instant, to write the *Sign of the Ship*, is to be in a position for which the harshest critic might feel sympathy.

Where'er these casual eyes are cast
Around me I behold

evidences of 'moving' and horrible reminders of work undone or half done. In these circumstances even Poetry would be welcome, as an addition to the cargo of this vessel, and I know that I have some poetry in stock, but where is it? At this moment of distraction my black cat calmly perches on, and blots, my manuscript! If one may judge by a great deal of popular writing, such personal details, piquant but not scandalous, are dear to a large portion of the literary public. Meanwhile the professors of Glasgow University are playing the occupants of St. Andrews chairs at golf, and I cannot witness a contest which will probably break some records and even a few clubs. By the way, a critic in the *National Observer* is informed, as he seems to be of the opposite opinion, that golf in the fifteenth century is *not* an anachronism. If he believes me not let him read the Badminton book, also the works of M. Siméon Luce, a learned man, but no player. Bicycles would have been an anachronism, I admit, but not golf.

* * *

The lady who writes from 'the abyss of Bayswater' is thanked for her anonymous contribution.

* * *

What follows is too funny to have been invented by way of a joke. It is from an American journal—*The World's Advance Thought*.

'FAIRY TALES, AND JEWISH-AMERICAN CHILDREN.

' DR. AUERBACH.

'The influence of the World's Religious Congress on the literature of the *fin de siècle* manifests itself in a peculiar anti-Semitic method, which even a Stoecker, an Ahlwardt, and their hate-breeding "Christian" *confrères* would not have expected in this land of free speech, free press, free soil, and free men, in the year of their Lord 1895. In order to promote hatred against the Jews in this country, and, particularly, to instil "Christian" malice against them into thousands of non-Jewish children, Andrew Lang rendered into English fairy tales from *Traditions Populaires de l'Asie-Mineure* (Paris, 1889), in a literary and often artistic style, which charming stories and other fascinating tales will be read with genuine delight and ever-increasing interest.

'Lang's book is entitled *The Blue Fairy Book* (sixth edition, London and New York, 1893). In the first story—"The Bronze Ring"—the Jew plays a part. He does not kill anybody; does not commit adultery; does not steal; does not dishonour nor kill father and mother; does not elope with another man's wife; does not, à la Jabez Balfour, in London (vide *Oregonian*, December 7), get away with five million dollars of savings, the loss of which ruined, by actual record, nearly forty thousand persons; does not &c. &c.—crimes which are usually committed by those who are taught the religion of Love *par excellence*.

'I shall not try to give a synopsis of the tale, but for the purpose of proving that even Religious Congresses, or the participation by Rabbis in thanksgiving services and in doxological praises to "the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost," in Protestant churches, and the paid-for singing by a Jewish soprano girl of "I know that my Redeemer liveth" will not remove prejudices; and that Shylocks and Fagins are still in demand.

'I call the attention of Jewish parents, whose children are readers of "Christian" fairy tales, to the last sentence of "The Bronze Ring." "The next day the Jew, tied to the tail of a savage mule loaded with nuts, was broken into as many pieces as there were nuts upon the mule's back."

"A thought," says Addison, "rose in me which often perplexes men of contemplative natures." To this thought the Roman poet, Juvenalis, gives expression: *Difficile est satiram non scribere* (It is difficult not to write a satire).

'[Dr. Auerbach's comments are well put; this hatred that is being fostered by "Christians" against the Jews is neither in accordance with the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, nor the Sermon on the Mount and the other teachings of the Jew—Jesus Christ—whom they pretend to follow. Ed.]'

The curious may ask, 'What did the Hebrew do?' He got dishonest possession of a magical ring, whereby he, among other misdeeds, turned a whole ship's crew into black cats. Was that a kind action? Was that one which a child of Israel could look back upon with the approval of his conscience? The story, I think, is from the modern Greek, and may reflect the ferocity of an early period. I generally try to modify the fate of the villain in fairy tales intended for children. I should have said, 'The Princess held up her forefinger at the Hebrew,' or 'The Jew was told to stand in a corner till he was good,' but, in fact, the detail escaped my attention. If Dr. Auerbach likes I can easily make the Jew an Armenian, or a Free Kirk man, or an extreme Anglican, in later editions. Anything for a quiet life! But perhaps only an Americanised Jew could be so extremely sensitive about a fairy tale. Had the malefactor been a Scotch instead of a Semitic pedlar our withers would have been unwrung.

* * *

Mr. St. Loe Strachey, in his book of *Spectator* Dog Stories, tells us what steps are taken to sift the evidence for these anecdotes. 'No stories are ever published unless the names and addresses of the writers are supplied, and all the stories are rejected which have anything clearly suspicious about them.' Is *that* all? Bogey stories are put through a sterner mill. First-hand evidence, with corroborative evidence, is demanded, and then nobody believes in them. Mr. Strachey makes much of Dog Stories falling into natural groups. But so do the tales which illustrate the habits of the ghost. The sceptical explanations of dog stories are exactly the same as those about the other creatures.

1. Hoaxes.
2. Faulty observations.
3. Chance coincidences.
4. Hallucination on the part of the reporters,

which is accepted by the most psychical as the explanation of ghost stories, but not, by Mr. Strachey, of dog stories. One would group ghosts as dogs are grouped.

Syllogistic ghosts.
 Reasoning powers of the ghost.
 Emotion and sentiment in ghosts.
 Ghosts and the Arts (Mr. Heaphy).
 Curious habits of ghosts.
 The sense of humour in ghosts.
 Useful ghosts.

One might add—

Mad Dogs. }
 Mad Ghosts.)
 Dogs that bite. }
 Ghosts that bite.)

I could write as big a book as Mr. Strachey's, under these heads, but to what purpose? I doubt if even the editor of the *Spectator* would be converted, though he has faith and to spare. He would argue that, to start with, there actually *are* dogs; this must be considered an impregnable position.

* * *

Ghosts have odd habits, I admit, but perhaps none so odd as burying frogs alive (p. 157). If any one told Mr. Myers that he saw a ghost burying frogs alive, I think Mr. Myers would murmur, 'Delirium tremens.' That the dog buried frogs alive because he had been bitten by a toad (p. 159) does not seem probable. Do toads bite dogs? Perhaps the dog was descended from the animal described in song:—

Say, have fiends in shape of boys
 Hunted thee from marshy joys
With a dog,
 Expiring frog?

Miss Cobbe suggests the toad theory. Perhaps the dog buried the frog to save it from vivisection.

* * *

A Newfoundland, named Oscar, belonging to myself, had often listened with much interest to stories of rescues of drowning persons by dogs. I happen to possess an engraving of Landseer's 'Member of the Humane Society.' Oscar would contemplate it for hours, and study the pose in the mirror. One day two little children were playing alone on St. Andrews Pier, and I was sketching the ruins at a short distance, Oscar running about on the pier. I happened to look up, and saw Oscar, as if inadvertently, but quite deliberately, back one of the children (Johnny

Chisholm was his name) into the water, which is there very deep. The animal then gave three loud howls to attract attention (he had been taught to give 'three cheers for Mr. Gladstone'), jumped into the water, rescued the child, and carried him, 'quite safe but very wet,' to the local photographer's, obviously that the deed might be commemorated by Art. Nobody saw the beginning of this tragedy except myself. Oscar, when brought home, deliberately rapped out 'Humane Society' with his tail on the floor, but, much as I appreciated his intelligence, I could not, in common honesty, give him a testimonial. This preyed on his mind; he accompanied a party to the top of St. Rule's tower, and deliberately leaped from the top, being dashed to pieces at the feet of an eminent divine whose works he had often, but unsuccessfully, entreated me to review in an unfavourable sense. His plan was to bring the book, lay it at my feet, and return with the carving knife in his mouth.

* *

This dog once brought home, from Edenmouth, a wild duck's nest full of eggs, which he hatched out. When he conceived that the nestlings were of an apt age, he carried them to the curling pond, where he superintended their education in swimming. When they grew up he brought Mr. —, a local sportsman whom he often accompanied, to the spot, and his purpose obviously was to acclimatise wild ducks within easy distance, and save the walk to the mouth of Eden. This appears to be good evidence of rudimentary reasoning powers in the dog. He was very fond of a cat named Peter, whom he would often take out for long swims on his back, when the weather was fine. Unluckily a storm arose one day. Peter was swept overboard and drowned. Oscar brought the poor animal in, dead, buried him above high-water mark, erected a biscuit box to his memory, and often visited the sepulchre with offerings of bones. A somewhat similar tale occurs in Mr. Strachey's valuable collection, only the buried animal was not a cat, but a retriever. A parallel to the rescue story will be found on p. 173. I had not read it when I penned my tribute to my canine friend. The resemblance in the anecdotes is a pure coincidence, unless you explain it by telepathy, which I think superfluous. Oscar one day worried a cockatoo of a neighbour which disturbed me a great deal. 'Will nobody relieve me from that abominable bird?' I exclaimed in a moment of pardonable irritation. Presently I saw Oscar leap out of my neighbour's drawing-

room window with the bird in his mouth. I was summoned before the baillies, but forgot to attend. Oscar, however, appeared in court alone. There is a parallel tale on p. 208 in Mr. Strachey's book. Oscar was fond of attending the lectures of Professor —, and at the more eloquent passages joined in the enthusiasm of the audience. The same thing often occurred, before our time, at the lectures of Dr. Chalmers; in fact, it became a nuisance. Observing my interest in archæology, and Lord Bute's diggings, Oscar himself, by nightly labours, excavated a considerable aperture, and his barkings underground were plainly audible, to the unspeakable emotion of mankind, from the First Hole to the harbour, where he appeared swimming, the sea level having obviously risen on the coast. This circumstance has prevented archæologists from tracing the subterranean passage, which I believe to be that referred to in Mr. Moncrieff's novel, *The X. Jewel*.¹ This tale I would recommend to lovers of romance. I have perused it with great, if rather mystified, interest; the author might have dealt a little more in explanations.

* * *

Quite a new way of advertising a book is to quote the publisher's reader. Here is an example:—

'Critics who have had the pleasure of seeing the MS. in advance speak most highly of it. One distinguished editor writes, "I have read Mrs. —'s story, —, with very deep interest. I will not say there are not some little matters in respect of which it might be improved, but these in no way detract from the muscular natural grip with which Mrs. — has laid hold of her characters and clothed them in flesh and blood. I think the story a very fine one, instinct with life on every page."'

'The pleasure of seeing the MS. in advance' is not so considerable that any one would willingly peruse a work *not* in advance, in manuscript.

* * *

It would be amusing if some such opinions as most books win from persons who have had the pleasure of reading the MS. in advance were published in the advertisements. 'Don't you have none of him,' 'The ordinary feminine twaddle,' 'Henty and water': such brief but sufficient verdicts hound an author to publish at his own expense in the long run.

* * *

The fancies of book-buyers are astounding. That Burns's

¹ Blackwood.

Kilmarnock edition might bring 121*l.* is, with an effort, conceivable, but 125*l.* for Thackeray's undergraduate papers, *The Snob* and *The Gownsmen*, bewilder. For Goldsmith's *Traveller* (1764) 96*l.* are paid. I have *The Traveller*, fourth edition, and *The Deserted Village*, first edition: I think I gave five shillings for the pair. Any one may buy them for 96*l.* For *Guy Mannering* (1815) 12*l.* 5*s.* seems an exorbitant ransom, even 'in original boards.'

* . *

Mrs. Oliphant, in the preface to her *Scotland*, for children, deprecates comparisons with the *Tales of a Grandfather*. I shall not make comparisons between a small book and a large one. Mrs. Oliphant has not room for details, for example, of the escape of Bothwellhaugh, after shooting Moray, or even of Mary's own escape from Loch Leven. Such things as these should, I think, be the *pièces de résistance* in a child's history, for the child delights in and remembers these things. The political facts he hates and forgets. Mrs. Oliphant wisely gives references, on occasion, to the appropriate Waverley novels. *The Tales of a Grandfather* certainly need a little 'bringing up to date'; for example, the story of the wrong done to Bothwellhaugh's wife is now discredited, I think rightly, and Mrs. Oliphant discredits it. Cut the chapters on Civilisation out of the *Tales*, correct facts where better authority has been discovered, shorten in places, and the *Tales* (as Mrs. Oliphant herself is the first to acknowledge) are excellent.

* . *

One or two points in Mrs. Oliphant's book need correction. How could Knox, in the French galley, see 'the rocks and ruins of St. Andrews'? (p. 130). He had not made the ruins yet. The castle, of course, was a good deal battered by the siege; the other 'ruins' could not be seen before they were made. Again (p. 128), I think it is not 'proved' that George Wishart was concerned in a plot to kill Cardinal Beaton. A certain Scot, named Wishart, was in it, and so were George Wishart's friends and protectors, but this does not amount to proof against George. With Moray Mrs. Oliphant has a good deal of difficulty. I believe he was a thorough Pecksniff, and Mrs. Oliphant clearly does not like him. About Knox she and her critic are perfectly agreed. If Scott says that the Covenanters wanted to secure 'liberty of conscience,' as Mrs. Oliphant remarks, 'he is mistaken here.' They, or one set of them, implored Charles II. not 'to lick up the vomit of toleration,' and,

when he did not do so, they blamed him ! Mrs. Oliphant seems (p. 192) to think that excommunication by the Kirk was rare. I fear it was the regular weapon of the Kirk, a boycott. Mrs. Oliphant believes in 'the murder of a peasant patriarch at his own door' by Claverhouse. If she means the Christian carrier I would refer her to Mr. Paget's criticism of Macaulay, or Aytoun's notes to the *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*: but she may remain unconverted. Who hanged Aikenhead, a boy of eighteen, for being a premature Biblical critic? He had been out in no rebellion, had no concealed arms or treasonable papers. The Kirk had him hanged, in 1696: though he recanted. The Inquisition would not have done so. Surely Dundee did not 'ride through the city of Edinburgh *after* speaking to the Duke of Gordon in the Castle,' and did he really climb the rock in boots and spurs? In *Bonnie Dundee* he rode to the foot of the high Castle rock, *after* riding through 'the cowls of Kilmarnock' in the streets. Nor can I blame his tactics at Killiecrankie. Mrs. Oliphant seems to think he should have opposed the English in the pass: his fortified position on the hill at its mouth was impregnable, and 'even the haggis, Cot pless her, could charge down a hill,' as his men did, to some effect. Mrs. Oliphant does not blink the savagery of William of Orange, but she omits the holding of the Bass, by Haliburton, Middleton, Roy, and Dunbar, for the King, a story which would delight all children.

The history stops at the Union. Not unwisely it omits these terrible 'Picts and Scots' who used to bore us so, and are best treated on the system of Thackeray's Miss Tickletoby. I might suggest an emendation on p. 225. 'Many were legitimists and clung to the Stewarts still, whom now it was the fashion to call Jacobites, from James, a name which lent itself to the formation of such a word.' This might lead children to think that the Stewarts were called Jacobites. Nor will children see how 'James' lends itself to the formation of the word Jacobite, unless they are informed that in Latin James is Jacobus. Mrs. Oliphant does not 'write down to' children, a thing which Scott himself found that he had overdone in the early part of his work. Like him she holds a very even balance between parties: it is a problem as to whether an historian should or should not take a side, as did Macaulay and Mr. Froude. 'The Little Liberals' History of England,' 'The Little Royalists' History of England' might be more entertaining than a level, judicious narrative. Parents (who know nothing of education) might object to a history with all the anecdotes and battles left in and most of the politics left out. But these very parents remember the anecdotes, if they remember anything, and

don't know who the Protesters and Remonstrants were. To a grown-up person, and to a child also, I think, Mrs. Oliphant's little book is very interesting and instructive, though her limits compel her to leave out a good deal of the romance of Scottish history.

* * *

One is glad to welcome Mr. Conan Doyle back to his own again. He is much happier with *Brigadier Gerard* (Newnes) than with his speculative young physician; at all events one of his readers is much happier. The Brigadier is less brigadierish than Major O'Geoghegan, but a good deal more so than Marbot. He is an absolutely delightful brigadier—brave, vain, not too clever. Of all his exploits his affair with the light-weight Ornament of the Fancy, in England, is perhaps the most entertaining, unless it be his game at cards with 'the Bart.' For humour, excitement, adventure, and manly feeling Mr. Doyle has never excelled this new work, which is a thing of the open air, and much superior to (as I trust it will be even more popular than) *Sherlock Holmes*. 'Mair meat,' we say, as the ghost said to King Jamie, more Brigadier, please, Mr. Doyle, when your leisure serves!

* * *

Here is my sweet enemy Professor Matthews, at Briticisms again. I have given him 'Interviewette,' which I found in some popular magazine, full of processed pictures and futilities. He offers 'Bewaring of the German Kurhaus,' by Mr. Lionel Tollemache. It is funny, I never saw the phrase before. Does a single use of any phrase, as 'continuateness' (the *Spectator*), make the phrase a Briticism? I reckon not, some. Back of this date I have urged the same objection, vainly. If I have leprosy, does that make leprosy a British malady?

'A good draw.'—That is slang, the stroke called 'the draw' has gone out.

Electrogravure.—I know not what it is, but it is as good as *photogravure*, any way.

'Groovy' and 'grooviness.'—In the *Idler*. I never saw them outside of the *Idler*. What does *squigglish* mean? I have heard that it has been used in America, but that does not constitute an Americanism.

Municipalisation.—In a letter, author unknown, to the *Times*. A neologism of an individual, like *acclimatize*.

Playettes.—Little Plays. In the *Queen*. The vulgarity of some very silly individual.

'Rail,' a verb, to go by rail (*Badminton Magazine*). Mr. Watson, the foreigner rails at you.

Serialist.—Once, in the *World*. I never heard the word before.

To slang, meaning to revile. Slang, but not new slang.

To solution, meaning 'to solve.' I never saw the word before, and hope never to see it again.

To tirade.—Mr. Augustine Birrell. I think he has, and I hope he will keep, this Birrellism to himself.

Vert.—'Hippy verteth.' In *Richard Feverel*. Also, to change sides. Slang, of 1844–1850: so as to avoid expressing opinions on *conversion* or *perversion*.

A popular win.—Racing slang.

Worsement.—The reverse of *betterment*. The word is not in general use, and is obviously employed as a jibe at *betterment*. Political slang.

In another world, I hope, but never in this, I fear, Mr. Matthews will understand that to pick a few neologisms, or vulgarisms of no general currency, out of such sources as he searches in is not to prove that the peccant terms are in general national use. Nothing short of being in general national use makes a phrase a *Britishism*, or an *Americanism*. This is a glaringly conspicuous fact. As Mr. Matthews knows, there is plenty of bad Greek in Attic inscriptions. Yet the sinful phrases are not Atticisms. But he won't see it!

* * *

A poem at last, by an American author too!

LIED UND LEID.

Lofty against our Western dawn uprises Achilles:

He among heroes alone singeth or toucheth the lyre.

Few, and dimmed by grief, are the days that to him are appointed:

Love he may know but to lose, life but to cast it away.

Dreaming of peace and a bride, he sees not the foes at the portal:

Paris, a traitor to love; Phœbus, accorder of song!

Freely he chose, do ye deem, and gave to the anguish and glory?

Rather the Fates at his birth chose: yet he gladly assents.

Is it a warning that death untimely and bitterest sorrow,

Sorrow in love and death, follow the children of song?

Yet will the young man's heart still cling to the choice of Achilles—

Grief, an untimely doom, fame that eternal abides.

WILLIAM C. LAWTON.

ANDREW LANG.

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